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THE PULPIT ORATOR:

CONTAINING SEVEN ELABORATE SKELETON SERMONS,

OR,

HOMILETIC, DOGMATICAL, LITURGICAL, SYMBOLICAL, AND MORAL SKETCHES,

FOR EVERY SUNDAY OF THE YEAR.

ALSO ELABORATE SKELETON SERMONS

FOR THE CHIEF FESTIVALS AND OTHER OCCASIONS.

WITHDRAWN

BY THE REV. JOHN EVANGELIST ZOLLNER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR, AND ADAPTED BY

THE REV. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O. S. B.

WITH PREFACE BY THE REV. A. A. LAMBING.

ELEVENTH REVISED EDITION.

VOL. I.

FROM THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT TO THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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PREFACE.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ having come upon earth that man might have life and might have it more abundantly, established his Church which should last till the end of time, in order that the fruits of the Incarnation and Redemption might be extended to mankind in all ages. He called the twelve Apostles, and having empowered them to rule the Church, to offer the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass and to forgive sins, he commissioned and commanded them to preach the Gospel to every creature, it being his will that all should come to the knowledge of God. "It pleased God," as the Apostle says, "by the foolishness of *our* preaching, to save them that believe."—*I. Cor.* 1 : 21. "For God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."—*John* 3 : 16. But "how shall they believe him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?—*Rom.* 10 : 14. In another place our divine Redeemer defines the power, the scope, and the subject-matter of the preacher of the Gospel when he says to his Apostles: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—*Matt.* 28 : 18, 19. They were, moreover, to preach like their divine Master, "as one having power, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees."—*Matt.* 7 : 29.

St. Paul, in his second Epistle to Timothy, further enlarges on the character of Apostolic preaching and the gravity of the commission which the Christian minister has received, when he addressed this solemn admonition to his favorite disciple—an admonition which the priest of God can not reflect upon too seriously: "I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead by his coming and his kingdom: Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine."—4 : 1, 2.

The most essential quality of preaching is *to teach;* and although the subject-matter must ever be the same, the manner of the

speaker and the style of his discourse, while always suited to the dignity of the word of God, must yet adapt themselves to the circumstances and the mental grasp of those whom he addresses. This, while a simple dictate of reason, has always been the practice of the Apostles, and of the most successful preachers of every age, and it is, besides, enjoined as a duty by the Council of Trent. St. Paul, who must ever be regarded as the highest model for Christian preachers, did not hesitate to descend to simplicity of language, as he assures the haughty Corinthians: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom . . . And my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom."—*I. Cor.* 2: 1-4. But yet he knew how to adapt his discourse to the capacity of the most learned and spiritual, when circumstances called for it, as he states in the same chapter: "Howbeit, we speak wisdom among the perfect."—*Ibid. v.* 6. Not that the graces of diction and oratory are to be disregarded, for St. Augustine admonishes the preacher of the divine word that he must study to render his audience well disposed and attentive before he can hope to succeed in teaching them, much less in administering a merited rebuke. But the beauties of language and action are only means to a higher end; and the Christian minister, whatever his talents and ability, is never permitted to speak with a view of merely entertaining his audience, or of eliciting applause. His mission is to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified.

There are, it is true, circumstances that seem to demand what are commonly called set sermons, in which all the elegances of language and oratory are called into play, and in which the principal object of the speaker would appear to be the entertainment of his hearers; but these occasions are rare, and such discourses are to be attempted by those only who are qualified to deliver them becomingly; and even then the good of the hearers must ever be the aim of the preacher. The greatest good is not as a general rule effected by the most celebrated preachers. These may be necessary to sustain the dignity of the profession; but the real harvest of souls is commonly reaped by those who employ simplicity of style and language; and these qualities, provided they are accompanied with that unction which flows from a spirit of prayer, will never fail to please and edify the

most learned. Lacordaire himself was enchanted with the simple discourses of the poor Curé of Ars, and he never thought more humbly of his abilities, that had so frequently enraptured the most refined circles of the French capital, than when he gazed on the emaciated form and drank in the simple words of the man who had barely the ability necessary for admittance into the ranks of the clergy.

We are not, however, to infer from this that the preacher of the Gospel should speak without care or preparation. On the contrary, nothing demands greater attention. The Christian preacher is the messenger of the Most High; he is divinely commissioned to declare those truths, and to explain that law upon which an eternity of happiness or misery depends; and this to souls created in the image of the living God, and redeemed with the precious blood and cruel death of Jesus Christ. So sacred is this duty that St. Charles Borromeo bids him speak with the same reverential fear as if he beheld Jesus Christ as his judge seated upon a throne at the further end of the church, awaiting the conclusion of his discourse to call him to account for the manner in which he delivered it. Witness the care bestowed upon their discourses by the Fathers of the Church, some of whom would not invite any one to their table, the better to devote that time to preparing themselves for breaking the bread of the word to the little ones of Christ. The consequence is, that they have handed down master-pieces of sacred eloquence that will elicit the admiration of the world to the end of time. Their homilies will ever be a mine of wealth for the pulpit orator, and he can hardly hope to attain to any degree of perfection, unless he makes them the subject of his constant study.

But times change, and the human mind changes with them. Christians in every succeeding age find themselves placed in different circumstances, and assailed by other enemies; and new weapons must be used to repel them, and new arguments employed to lead the faithful in the path of duty. Hence it is that while the homilies of the Fathers can always be studied with profit, the circumstances in which the minister of the Gospel is now placed are so different from theirs that he is seldom or never permitted to adopt their discourses and deliver them as his own. Indeed, no speaker can so far identify himself with

another as to be able to employ his precise words with profit, or even with safety, much less the words of those of a far distant and different age, and of such colossal minds as the Fathers of the Church. And the same may be said of the master-pieces of pulpit oratory that have been translated from the French and other modern languages. They are not at all suited to the wants and circumstances of our people, and still less, perhaps, to our abilities. What, for example, have our people in common with those of the French court, before whom the most celebrated of these discourses were preached? Yet the train of thought, the line of argument, the illustrations, and the proofs of another, may frequently be employed with profit. Such recourse to foreign sources is often necessary in the peculiar circumstances in which pastors of souls, especially in this country, are placed. It may be said above board and without fear of contradiction, that far too little attention is devoted to the study of the English language and sacred eloquence in almost all, if not all, the ecclesiastical seminaries of this country. Students are commonly hurried through their short course, under professors whose training has not always been such as to fit them for the position they hold; and with the minimum of attainments they are ordained to the sacred ministry—for the want of priests is our great want—and are sent out on the mission, either in cities where their duties are so arduous and their leisure so broken up as to prevent them from continuing to cultivate their minds; or into the country, where their attention must be devoted to extensive districts, and where their opportunities of study are few, and their chances of consultation rare. In addition to this, their training has not generally been such as to instil into their minds the advantages of system, and the means of securing it. The consequence is that the meagre love of study acquired in the seminary is soon lost; too little attention is paid to the preparation of sermons; the word of God is not treated with the respect due to it, and preaching is neither so pleasing to the priest nor so profitable to the people as it should be. But I confess I accept with considerable reservation the statements of those who complain of want of time; it is more commonly want of system.

It must be admitted, however, that there are times in which the most learned and industrious stand in need of assistance. This

they can not derive from the sermon-books within their reach; for these, having but one discourse for each Sunday or feast, do not afford sufficient variety, and can not, at best, be used more than once in a long period of years. Or, if skeletons, they are so meagre as to afford only a brief outline, leaving all the labor of thought to the preacher. Besides, both the priest and the people need variety; the former, because he is not always in a mood to preach on the particular subject he may find in such books; the latter, because monotony is distasteful, and much more, because it is necessary for them to receive instruction on the whole teachings of the Church, and admonitions, as circumstances may require, on the duties of their state of life.

In these circumstances, no book could be more acceptable to both priest and people than the one which is now presented to them. It will be useful to the young and inexperienced among the reverend clergy, because it will supply them with all that is necessary; while it will be no less advantageous to those of more advanced age and mature experience, by affording them a means of preventing repetion in their discourses—a fault which it is difficult for those to avoid whose duties require them to address the same congregation on the same portions of Scripture for several consecutive years.

To every Sunday are assigned seven discourses on the Epistle and Gospel which the Church has set apart for it; and while these are so diversified as to afford, at least, one that can not fail to suit the mood of the preacher, there is not one but will convey wholesome instruction and salutary admonition to the minds of the hearers. [For each of the chief festivals and other solemn occasions from one to six discourses are given in Vol. VI.]

Ranging through the wide field of dogma, moral, liturgy, and symbol, supplying such a fund of instruction as is rarely met with in any work and certainly not in any in our language, these volumes can not fail to be acceptable to the zealous laborer in the vineyard of God. And the manner in which the whole is arranged is no less happy. The theme, the text, the exordium, the division, the proofs from Scripture, the extracts from the Fathers, the illustrations, and the peroration containing the practical conclusion, are so disposed as to be taken in at a glance. And while all is

systematic, judicious, instructive, and solid, the illustrations are in many cases so ingenious and striking, and so different from what is commonly heard by our people, that they can not fail to arrest the attention of the audience, and engrave deeply on the memory the lessons they accompany.

The part of the translator has been faithfully performed; for, while preserving the spirit of the original, and rendering it with all its force and lucidity, he has clothed his volumes in such a clear and popular style as to make the work eminently suited to the needs of our people. In the style of the type, the quality of the paper, and the general execution of the mechanical part of the work, the printer has also contributed materially to the value of "THE PULPIT ORATOR," and the pleasure of the reader in its perusal. Nothing, in fact, seems wanting. And while the sacred orator should not as a rule adopt the precise language of another, and can not adopt that of the sermons generally found in our language, the discourses given in this work are so fully developed as materially to assist him in the delivery, and the form itself may be adopted with advantage, especially by the younger members of the reverend clergy, whose experience may not yet have been such as to supply them with a ready flow of language.

The many encomiums pronounced upon the original, and also upon this translation, by distinguished prelates and others capable of appreciating its merits, are the strongest guarantee of its worth; and the pastor of souls who will make use of it in his discourses to his people, will readily be convinced of its advantages to himself and to them, and will thank the translator for the pains he has taken to supply the American clergy with a work so eminently useful. And the translator, on his part, will feel himself amply rewarded if he can be of service to those who, like himself, are engaged in promoting the honor and glory of God in the salvation of souls redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

A. A. LAMBING.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IT SPEAKS well for "The Pulpit Orator" that the entire edition of one thousand copies is exhausted, not a single copy being left. It plainly shows that it has been highly appreciated by the English-speaking clergy, from whom it has elicited the highest encomiums. It affords me great pleasure to be able to announce to them that many have urged upon me to republish the work, which it is also pleasing to me to know is doing much good. It has been to me a labour of love; and I would most urgently recommend it to all young priests in particular, as a *Vade mecum*, withthe assurance that if they will use it for several years as a text-book for their sermons they will be *Pulpit Orators*, that is to say, they will be able to speak with ease on any subject on any occasion. That it may continue to do a great deal of good for the honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls is the prayer of

THE TRANSLATOR.

NINTH EDITION.

The present edition is the result of a careful revision. The numerous references to Sacred Scripture have been verified and, when necessary, corrected in accordance with the Douay and Rheims English versions of the Old and New Testaments. —

HENRY S. BUTTERFIELD.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

EPISTLE. *Rom.* 13: 11-14. Brethren: Knowing the time, that is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light; let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

CONCERNING THE THINGS AGAINST WHICH THE APOSTLE WARNS US, AND THE THINGS WHICH HE EXHORTS US TO DO.

In your prayer-books you find an epistle or lesson and also a gospel for every Sunday and Holiday of the Ecclesiastical Year. The epistles or lessons, as well as the gospels, are selections from the Holy Scriptures. The former are generally taken from the Epistles of the Apostles, and are therefore called epistles or letters. They are also called lessons, or "readings," because they were read during the divine offices, a custom which is observed even to this day. The gospels are selections from one of the four Gospels written by the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The epistles contain the word of God as well as the gospels, because, like these, they are portions of the Sacred Scriptures. Both gospels and epistles were selected because of their appropriateness to the holy season or feast of the Ecclesiastical Year which is being celebrated. They throw light thereon and serve to awaken in us holy thoughts corresponding to the occasion.

I propose briefly to explain to you this morning the words of St. Paul which I have just read. They are very appropriate to this day, it being the first of the Ecclesiastical Year, as also

to the holy season of Advent upon which we are entering. The Apostle solemnly admonishes us in regard to those things we are to avoid and to do, especially during this holy season. Let us then consider

I. Those things against which the Apostle warns us; and
II. What he exhorts us to do.

PART I.

The Apostle cautions us:

1. *Against sleep,*
2. *Against the works of darkness in general,*
3. *Against certain works of darkness.*

1. *Knowing the time, that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep.* St. Paul addresses these words to the Christians in Rome. He intends to say: "You lived long enough, when you were still Pagans and Jews, in ignorance and forgetfulness of salvation; it is time now for you to awake from your sleep of death, to renounce sin, and zealously to work out your salvation." This exhortation and earnest invitation concerns us also, for there are not a few among us who are sleeping. Who are they? Those who, on account of business and too great anxiety for temporal things, do not find time to fulfil their religious duties, viz., to say their daily prayers, or to assist at mass, etc., on Sundays and Holidays. Those who neglect the duties of their state of life—careless fathers, careless mothers, who do not keep their children and servants from evil, who are indifferent about their respective duties; those who, continuing to live in the state of sin, will do nothing meritorious for heaven. Oh, that all these would rise from their spiritual sleep! Woe to those who continue to sleep! they will share the fate of the unprofitable servant mentioned in the gospel.—*Matt.* 25: 26. Oh, that in this time of Advent, "when our salvation is nearer," and we are to prepare ourselves for the approaching birthday of Jesus Christ, we all would without further delay take in hand the business of our salvation!

2. *Let us cast off the works of darkness.* All sins are works of darkness; sins in thought and desire, in words and works. Why does St. Paul call sins works of darkness? Because every sin is the work of the devil, who is the spirit of darkness. "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning."—*I. John* 3: 8. Consider what you do when you sin: you do what the devil did from the beginning and still does. Is not this base? Sins are called works of

darkness, because sin is usually committed in secret, in darkness. "They loved darkness, rather than the light; for their works were evil."—*John* 3: 19. Sin is something so base that even the greatest reprobate feels ashamed of it; for this reason he sins in secret and tries to hide his wicked actions from the eyes of men, or to palliate them. If people could look into your heart, would you entertain those proud, unchaste, envious, and uncharitable thoughts and desires? If God were to allow you to commit theft, fornication, adultery, etc., publicly, would even one among you commit these vices? Sins are called works of darkness, because sin leads to everlasting darkness, viz.: to damnation. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers and whoremongers, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."—*Apoc.* 21: 8. Who can think of this darkness, and not tremble and abandon his life of sin?

3. *St. Paul warns us against certain works of darkness*, namely, *against rioting and drunkenness, against chambering and impurities, against contention and envy.* These vices were prevalent among the Gentiles, but, after becoming Christians, they were exhorted by the Apostle to guard against them with all possible care. Christianity makes it a stern duty for us to live soberly and chastely, to have patience with one another, and to love one another. Let us, during the holy season of Advent, cast off all works of darkness, and especially intemperance in drinking, impurity, contention, and enmity, and practice the opposite virtues: temperance, chastity, peace, and concord.

Part II.

The Apostle exhorts us:

1. *To put on the armor of light,*
2. *To walk honestly,*
3. *To put on Christ.*

1. *Let us put on the armor of light.* The Apostle understands by this armor of light the virtues which we are to practice. He calls them armor or weapons, because they can be acquired and employed only in combat, in struggles. To live piously is no easy task. Three powerful enemies are to be overcome: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Down stream the ship goes of herself; to make her go up stream requires a propeller. What combat and self-denial does it not cost to overcome all temptations to ambition, impurity,

anger, and envy! How many impediments do we not meet with in the performance of the duties of religion and our state of life! It requires an effort on our part to say even the Lord's Prayer devoutly. The words of Jesus are absolutely true: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12. We must not, however, on that account lose courage; if only our will be good and we do what in us lies God will enable us to bear our crosses, overcome difficulties, and surmount every obstacle to virtue. For God will support us by his grace, and strengthened by this, we may confidently say: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me."—*Phil.* 4: 13. He calls Christian virtues armor of light, because they are an ornament to the Christian who practices them. The virtuous are not only praised by all good men, but even the wicked cannot help admiring them. What veneration throughout the whole Christian world do not the saints enjoy on account of the heroic virtues which they practiced during life. A man may be poor and of low extraction, yet if he live piously and virtuously, every one who knows him will feel in his heart more esteem for him than for people who are rich and of noble extraction, but who lack virtue. "That seed of men shall be honored which feareth God."—*Ecclus.* 10: 23. The virtues of modesty and chastity, are practicularly attractive. "Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men."—*Wis.* 4: 1, 2. In the full splendor of their glory they will appear in heaven. "Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."—*Matt.* 13: 43. The least of the saints will enjoy more honor than did Solomon, to whom, on account of his wisdom and splendor, not only his own subjects, but also all the adjacent nations paid homage. And should not we be willing to put on the armor of light, which prepares for us here and hereafter so great an honor and felicity?

2. *Let us walk honestly, as in the day.* He who walks in broad daylight takes care not to offend against good manners and decorum; he clothes himself decently, for nobody goes about undressed in the daytime. As children of light, we should comport ourselves honestly, decently, and modestly in word and deed, and carefully avoid all that is contrary to Christian decorum. And we should do so:

(*a.*) *On account of God,* who sees us everywhere, and who will one day call us to an account for our most secret actions. Guard, therefore, against hypocrisy and deceit; you may sometimes deceive men, but God never. What confusion for the hypocrite when his mask is torn off on the day of judg-

ment, and he is confounded before the whole world! They will then say: "Ye mountains, fall upon us! ye hills, cover us!"—*Luke* 23: 30. Let us frequently think of this, and endeavor to walk honestly and decently, not only before men, but also before God.

(*b.*) *On account of men.* It is our duty to give good example. "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 16. All Christians are bound to do this, but particularly parents, masters and mistresses, in their conduct towards their children and servants. To give good example is for them not only a general duty of religion, but a particular duty of their state. Woe to them, if they act dishonestly and indecently, if they deport themselves in an unchristian-like manner. "Woe to the world because of scandals; for it must needs be that scandals come, but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh."—*Matt.* 18: 7.

3. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* What is it to put on Jesus Christ? It is to adopt the thoughts of Jesus, to imitate his actions, to think, speak, and act as Christ did. How did Jesus think? He hated sin, he despised the things of this world, he loved all men, even his enemies, and his food was to do the will of his heavenly Father. How did Jesus speak? Only in such a manner as the honor of his Father and the salvation of men required. He never spoke an idle, vain, unnecessary word. How did Jesus act? According to the will of his Father. His most inveterate enemies cannot discover in him the shadow of sin; he was the most perfect example of all virtues, and he went about doing good.

Now examine yourselves. Have you put on Jesus Christ? Do you think as he did? Are your words always good, useful, and edifying? Are your actions in perfect conformity with his? Ah, what a humiliating testimony must you give of yourselves, probably, in this self-examination! Perhaps you are the very opposite of Christ. But know that you can reasonably hope for salvation only when you put on Jesus Christ; for the Apostle says: "Whom God foreknew (to be saved) he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son."—*Rom.* 8: 29. "Put off the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth."—*Ephes.* 4: 22–24.

PERORATION.

In the year of our Lord 386, Augustine, a captive in the bonds of sin and error, was weeping bitterly and sighing for the

liberty of the children of God. He heard a voice repeatedly calling out to him: "Take and read." He opened at random the Bible that was lying before him, and found the passage in the epistle for this day: "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting or drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." He was at once a changed man; he renounced his errors and sins, became a saint and one of the most renowned teachers and doctors of the Church. May the epistle of this day produce the same effect in us all, may we all rise from our spiritual lethargy, cast off the works of darkness, walk in all decency and in the fear of the Lord, as in the day, and put on our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

GOSPEL. *Luke* 21: 25-33. At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves, men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved: and then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads: because your redemption is at hand. And he spoke to them a similitude. See the fig-tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE COMING OF CHRIST AT THE JUDGMENT.

The Church reminds us to-day, the first Sunday of Advent, of a threefold coming of Christ upon earth, a past, present, and future. His first coming took place about nineteen hundred years ago, when he became man. His second coming is always taking

place and will continue to do so until the end of the world, as long as infidels and sinners are truly converted; for to them he comes with his grace and makes his dwelling in their hearts. This spiritual coming of Christ into our hearts should take place during this holy season of Advent. It is so intended by the Church. His third coming will take place at the end of the world, when he will come to judge the living and the dead. The gospel today speaks of this third coming of Christ at the last judgment, and let us accordingly make it the subject of our meditation. Jesus prophesies.

I. The events before his final coming,
II. His coming itself, and
III. Fulfils the truth of his prophecy.

Part I.

1. *Jesus prophesies the events which will take place before his final coming.* Great events cast their shadows before them. God frequently announces them and sends warnings by certain signs. So with the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Jewish nation. Forms appeared in the heavens representing powerful armies marching towards Jerusalem. The temple, during the service one evening, was enveloped all at once in a sheet of light, a mighty wind arose, and a voice was heard saying: "Let us depart hence." A certain man, supposed to be insane, ran hither and thither, crying out continually: "Woe to Jerusalem! woe to the temple!" And lastly: "Woe to Jerusalem! woe to the temple! and woe to myself!" and then, struck by a missile which was thrown by the Romans, he fell dead. God will also cause more terrific prodigies and stranger phenomena to precede the last judgment, in order to induce the good to prepare themselves the better for the coming of the divine Judge, and to move the wicked to do penance.

2. *What will these signs be? "There shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars."* For Christ has said: "The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light; the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved."—*Matt.* 24: 29. St. John, having seen these signs in a vision, says: "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood, and the stars from heaven fell upon the earth, as the fig-tree casteth its green figs when shaken by a great wind."—*Apoc.* 6: 12, 13. All the heavenly bodies will leave their accustomed orbits, and clash one against another, producing a confusion and destruction, of which two trains rushing against each other can give but a faint idea.

3. *Why do these signs take place?* St. Jerome answers this question. We shall be punished by everything, because we have sinned in everything, that what is written may be fulfilled: "The whole world shall fight with him against the unwise."—*Wisd.* 5:21. Men abuse the sun, moon, and stars, sinning day and night; therefore God will make use of these heavenly bodies, profaned by the vices and crimes of men, to punish impenitent sinners. The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give her friendly light, and not a star will be seen in the firmament. How will men feel when they remember their sins, the mute witnesses of which were the sun, moon, and stars? Oh, Christians, abuse not the light of day and the darkness of night by the commission of sin. Whilst all the heavenly bodies are disturbed and about to be dissolved, the earth will also be drawn into sympathy. It will shake and tremble, not as it does now, here and there, but over its entire surface, in a most dreadful manner. Whole cities will be laid in ruins, and people without number will be buried beneath them; rivers will leave their accustomed channels and overflow their banks, while the ocean, foaming with fury and swelling high above the tops of the mountains, will burst from its bed and roll over kingdoms and empires, carrying numberless corpses with it; fire will fall from heaven, and will meet other fire rushing from the bowels of the earth, and everything within its reach will be devoured and consumed. Winds will break down whole forests like a reed, and the strongest buildings will fall to the ground; hunger and pestilence will rage on the whole earth and snatch away millions of men. Yes, the unfettered elements, inflamed by the wrath of God, will spread ruin and desolation over the whole world; for, as Christ says: "There shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be; and unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved."—*Matt.* 24:22.

Who can think of these frightful events without fear and trembling? "But," you will say, "these events are far off yet; we shall never live to see them; why should we be in fear of them?" Whether they are far off or near, nobody knows; but suppose they occur after a thousand years, we shall all live to witness them. "But shall we not die—die after a few years?" Well, when we do die the end of the world will be at hand for us. The sun, moon, and stars will no longer be in the heavens for us; the earth, with all it has and gives, will perish for us. Our body is placed in the grave, our soul appears before the tribunal of God. Oh, ponder well this truth, and act accordingly. Let us not love this world inordinately, nor for fleeting pleasures offend our Lord and God, and lose on account of temporal things those which are eternal. The occurrences immediately before the coming of Christ will also take place at the death of every man. The wicked, when

these things come to pass before the last judgment, will be seized with fear, terror, and anguish; for these events will announce not only their temporal, but also their eternal perdition; but the just, filled with sweet hope, will lift up their heads—for only a short combat—then eternal triumph and victory. The same may be said of death. How do the wicked die? Antiochus (*I. Mach.* 6: 8--16)? Voltaire? "The death of the wicked is very evil."—*Ps.* 33: 22. How do the good die? "With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed."—*Ecclus.* 1: 13. And St. Paul says: "I have a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ."—*Phil.* 1: 23.

Part II.

Jesus foretells his advent.

Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.

1. *They shall see the Son of Man coming.* This Son of Man is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man. He will be our Judge, for "God hath given him authority to do judgment, because he is the Son of Man."—*John* 5: 27. Judgment is the last act of the work of the Redemption, because by it the elect will be separated from the reprobate, and united for ever in heaven with Jesus, their head; therefore, as the Incarnation is the beginning, so the last judgment will be the end of the Redemption, and for this reason Jesus, the Son of Man, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, will be our Judge.

(*a.*) *This is a consoling truth for the just.* The more unknown, the more exalted, and the more rigorous a judge is, with so much the more fear do people appear before him. But if he is our friend, perhaps a blood relation, and known for his clemency, we have confidence, and we cheerfully commit our cause into his hands. Now, if Jesus were only God, he would be to us, in some sense, a sort of stranger, standing infinitely above us, and his divine justice and holiness would overawe us. But he is not only God, he is also man, and as man, he is like us in everything, sin alone excepted, and withal full of mercy and compassion. With what confidence, then, will the just appear before his tribunal! Even the sins which they committed cannot shake their confidence, for they have done penance, and they know that a contrite and humble heart he will not despise.—*Ps.* 50: 19.

(*b.*) *A terrifying truth for impenitent sinners.* Looking at Jesus, the Son of Man, they will be reminded, on the one hand, of the sacrifices which he made for them from the crib at Bethlehem till he exclaimed on the cross at Calvary, "It is consummated;"

of the love and mercy which he showed them; of the graces and means of salvation which he offered them; on the other hand, they will be reminded of their unbelief, impiety, and ingratitude, their continued impenitent life, their abuse of numberless graces, and their resistance to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. They will appear before a Judge whose enemies they had been during their whole life, whose sacred Blood they had trampled under foot, and whom by their sins they had crucified anew. What anguish, what despair, must seize them when they look upon Jesus, the Son of Man! Let us endeavor during life to have Jesus for our friend, that we may not fear him on the day of judgment.

2. *They shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.* What a difference between the first and second coming of Jesus! The first time he came in poverty and lowliness, a weak child, unknown to the world; he came to live and work for men, to redeem and save them. The second time, he will come in a cloud, the sign of his divine dignity, by which he led the children of Israel through the desert, and in which he ascended into heaven; he will come with great power and majesty, surrounded by angels and saints, displaying his divine perfections, especially his Omnipotence, from which no one, not even the mightiest potentate, can screen himself, his Omniscience that searches the reins and the hearts, and his Justice, before which there is no regard of persons.

All men will see him coming. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, "that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil."—*II. Cor.* 5: 10. How will Jesus receive me? —and you? On which side will he place us? to the right or to the left? which of the two sentences shall we hear — "Come," or "Depart?" These are serious questions, deciding our lot for all eternity. Think of them, especially at the beginning of the new Ecclesiastical Year, and resolve to live through it and the remaining years of your life in such a manner that you may have no reason to tremble when the time for the decision shall come.

PART III.

JESUS CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF HIS PROPHECY.

1. *By the parable of the fig-tree.* God, after the deluge, promised Noe when he offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving, "that he would no more curse the earth for the sake of man, and that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, night and day, should not cease."—*Gen.* 8: 21, 22. The meaning of

this parable is: As certain as it is that when the fig-tree or any other tree, brings forth fruit the summer is nigh, so certain is it that when these things come to pass the end of the world and the last judgment will be at hand. If, therefore, we should live till the sun, moon, and stars begin to disappear from heaven, and darkness cover the earth, day and night, we could, supported by the prophecy of Jesus, say with certainty: Now the world approaches its end, Jesus, the Judge of the living and the dead, is coming.

Many of our so called scientists would perhaps call us superstitious and endeavor to explain all these signs by natural means, but we should be deceived if we believed them. Let this be a warning to you not to be led astray by Free-thinkers and infidels.

2. *By these words: "Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled."* What generation is this that shall not pass away till the end of the world? This generation is the Jews. All other ancient peoples, the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, Romans, have either disappeared altogether, or have been so amalgamated with other nations as to leave no trace of their existence. The Jews are the only exception. Although scattered to the four winds for the last eighteen hundred years, they have not lost their peculiarities. They still have their own peculiar features, their religion, and manner of living. This wonderful existence and preservation of the Jews is evidence of the truth of the prophecy of Jesus, and will remain so, till the prophecy is fulfilled. Admire herein the wisdom of God, which makes use of unbelievers and obstinate sinners to convince us of the Divinity of Christ and the truth of his doctrine.

3. *By the assertion, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."* The meaning is: My words are unchangeable truth; all things which I have prophesied concerning the events which will precede my coming will most certainly be fulfilled, and to the very minutest circumstance. But besides foretelling the end of the world, our Blessed Lord prophesied also the overthrow of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem with its temple. The latter prophecy has been fulfilled to the very letter, and this is a proof that the former will be, for Christ, the infallible Truth, is the Author of one and the other. *Heaven and earth shall pass away.* By these words it is not to be understood that the earth will be entirely destroyed, but that it will cease to be the abode of sinful man, and will be purified, changed, and renewed by the omnipotence of God. Hence St. Jerome says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, not by destruction, but by a process of metamorphosis or transmutation." When this temporal existence has come to a close,

and eternity begins for all that is created, all the evils which sin has caused in the creation will be taken away, and the whole universe will return into that glorious state of integrity and goodness in which it came forth from the hand of God: there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

PERORATION.

Consider seriously the important truths contained in the gospel of this Sunday, and live according to them. Terrible events will precede the coming of the Divine Judge; think of them with a salutary fear, so much the more, as they will all, in a certain sense, take place at your death. Jesus Christ will, as Judge, demand an account of the use of the grace of Redemption which his first coming brought you. Let us make good use of this grace now, that when the day of reckoning comes we may be able to endure the judgment. Let us to-day, the first of the Ecclesiastical Year, make the resolution to dedicate this year to God that it may become for us a year of salvation. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

They shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.—Luke 21: 27.

The gospel of this day transports us in spirit to the end of time, and exhibits to our view that great day which is to decide our doom for all eternity, when Christ will appear upon earth the second time, to judge the living and the dead. All men that ever lived, or live now, or shall live to the end of time, will hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth from their graves; after their resurrection, they will be gathered together before his tribunal, to be judged publicly in the face of heaven and earth. Every one will then receive what he has deserved during his lifetime. "I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and they were judged according to their works."—*Apoc.* 20: 12, 13. This is the last or general judgment,

because after this, there will be no other, and because it extends to all men, without exception. Of this judgment I shall speak to you to-day, and prove that it will take place:

I. From the belief of all nations,
II. From reason.

Part I.

That there will be a general judgment at the end of time has ever been the belief of all nations, Jews, Christians, and Heathens.

1. *It was the belief of the Jews.* The patriarchs who lived before the deluge believed and preached this truth to the wicked for their warning. In the Catholic Epistle of St. Jude (1 : 15), we read that Henoch, the seventh patriarch from Adam, who "walked with God" (*Gen.* 5 : 24), and who, without dying a natural death, was taken from the earth, prophesied the last judgment, saying: "Behold, the Lord cometh with thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to reprove the ungodly of all the works of their impiety, whereby they have done impiously, and of all the hard things which impious sinners have spoken against God." "How," you may ask, "did Henoch know that there would be a general judgment?" Because Jared, his father, had told him. And how did Jared know it? Again, from his father, Malaleel, and thus we come back to Adam, the progenitor of the human race. But how did Adam come to the knowledge of the general judgment? Evidently not of himself; God revealed it to him, with the other truths of faith.

Numberless passages in the Old Testament prove that the belief in a general judgment always existed among the Jews. David and the prophets speak of it, not only in general, but in particular, naming even the place where it will be held (*Joel* 3 : 2-12), the circumstances that will accompany it (*Is.* 66 : 15--18), and the events preceding it.—*Joel* 2 : 30, 31. And if you ask the Jews that live among us, and who still adhere to the faith of their fathers, they will answer you: "We believe that Jehovah will hold a judgment at the end of the world, and render to all men, the good and the bad, according to their works."

2. *It is the belief of Christians.* Christ taught it in the clearest terms: "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then will he render to every man according to his works."—*Matt.* 16 : 27. Other passages (*Matt.* 25 : 31, etc., *Mark* 14 : 62, *Luke* 21 : 27, etc, *John* 12 : 48). Christ, moreover, gives us a clear idea of this truth in the parable of the wheat and cockle. He applies it to the last judgment, saying: "He that soweth good seed, is the Son of Man; the field is the

world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the cockle are the children of the wicked one, and the enemy that sowed them is the devil; but the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. Even as cockle, therefore, is gathered up, and burnt with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."—*Matt.* 13: 37–43.

The Apostles always and everywhere preached the doctrine of the last judgment. St. Peter says: "He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that is he who hath been appointed by God to be judge of the living and of the dead."—*Acts* 10: 42. St. Paul preached to the Athenians: "God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in equity, by the man whom he hath appointed, giving faith to all, by raising him up from the dead."—*Acts* 17: 31. I deem it superfluous to quote any more passages, but will only remark, that for the last eighteen hundred years, there never has been a Catholic Christian, nor even a heretic, who dared to deny a future judgment.

3. *It was the belief of the Pagans.* What more shall I say? We find that even among pagan nations belief in a future judgment was universal. According to the belief of the ancient *Egyptians*, the disembodied soul descends to the lower regions and must appear before the throne of the god Osiris to be judged. If the soul is not pure, she is condemned to pass through different bodies of animals, till after the lapse of a long era of three thousand years she can return into a human body, and rise again. The pure soul enjoys a blessed rest until the resurrection. When the era of three thousand years is passed, the souls, after rising in their human bodies, are for ever admitted into the society of the gods, but those who are found to be bad must again pass through the bodies of animals, in punishment, and if after this they continue bad, they will never obtain the immortality of the blessed. Thus we see that the Egyptians believed, not only in judgment immediately after death, but also in a resurrection from the dead, and in a general judgment, which was to be decisive for all eternity.

We find the same belief among the *Persians.* Their doctrine is this: The evil spirits come immediately after death to claim the soul; if the soul be good she is protected by the good spirits; but if bad, she is abandoned to the evil ones. The combat lasts three days and three nights, during which prayers are uninterruptedly said for the departed soul. On the fourth day the souls, good and bad, come to a bridge, which leads into the other

world. Here the god Ormuzd holds judgment over them; those that are found pure are permitted to be led by the heavenly spirits into the mansions of the blessed, over a high, narrow way; but the bad are cast into the darkness of hell. There they are tortured till they have done penance for their sins, or their relatives on earth have satisfied for them by prayer and good works. But if their crime is so great that it cannot be atoned for, they must remain in the place of torment till the day of the general resurrection. At the end of the world, and after the resurrection, all souls must pass through fire to be purified, and when Sosiostch, born of a virgin (viz., the Messias, Redeemer), has held judgment, the pure will be admitted into the mansions of bliss, but the sinners must suffer for three days and three nights torments more intolerable than if they lasted for nine thousand years. After wards there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

The ancient Germans cherished the same belief. The souls of those who fell in battle were admitted into the palace of the god Odin, Walhalla, where they enjoyed pleasures similar to those they had upon earth, such as eating, drinking, hunting, and wars. The other good souls, and those who died of old age or sickness, were admitted into the palace of the goddess Hel, in which there was misery of every kind; the bad were cast into the Nastrand, hell. But the state of the soul in these three places was not an eternal one, but lasted only till the end of the world, when the final judgment took place; after that the good were admitted into heaven, and the bad were cast into hell.

Thus you see that the Pagans knew and believed, although confounded with some errors, the principal truths of divine revelation, as for instance, the particular judgment after death, the general resurrection of the dead at the end of the world, and the last judgment. If we ask whence they derived this knowledge and belief, we must answer: From a primeval revelation of God. God himself revealed these truths to men at the beginning of the world; the revelation was transmitted to all nations of the earth, from generation to generation, and preserved in a confused manner even after they fell into idolatry, and thus it comes that we find among the Pagans the belief in a general judgment.

If therefore there are men calling themselves Christians who do not believe in the immortality of the soul, and consequently in judgment either after death or at the end of the world, they are in opposition to the Jews, Christians, Pagans, and the whole human race, and stand many degrees lower than the nations that are sunk in idolatry. And yet they call this foolish unbelief progress. Happily, in the eyes of all who think and feel in a Christian-like manner, it is sheer folly. But reason also demands that there should be a general judgment.

PART II.

Reason tells us that God in a manner owes it,

1. *To himself,*
2. *To Jesus Christ, his Son,*
3. *To men,*

to hold a general judgment at the end of the world.

1. *He owes it to himself.* There are many things upon earth. which in our short-sightedness we cannot comprehend, nor reconcile with God's wisdom, justice and goodness. To mention only one thing, the present affliction of the Catholic Church in Europe and elsewhere. We see our Holy Father deprived of his patrimony, reviled, persecuted, a prisoner in his palace, while many bishops and hundreds of priests are either in prison or in exile; Catholic congregations are groaning under the necessity, imposed upon them by godless men, of living and dying deprived of the pastors of their souls, and consequently of the consolations of religion. How can God permit this? We see men without faith or religion, full of vanity and malice, living luxurious lives and possessing everything their heart can desire, while good, faithful Christians languish in contempt and misery and all their efforts for justice and truth come to naught. How can God permit this? We see men who do nothing but evil in the world live on to old age; men, on the contrary, who are invaluable to Church and State, die in the prime of life. How can God ordain this? Truly if the day that will solve these and a thousand other riddles were never to come, the wisdom, justice and goodness of God must always remain for us an insolvable enigma.

But that day will come. It is the day of general judgment. On that day those things that we cannot now comprehend will be made manifest. We shall see that in all events, the greatest as well as the smallest, the wise and the just Providence of God was ruling and ordaining all; that everything should be so, and not otherwise, and that all evils, even the greatest sins and crimes of men, tended to the good of the elect. On the last day God will not only call men to an account, but he will also give an account as it were of himself, and of everything which he ordained and permitted from the beginning of the world. Then heaven and earth and hell will be bound to confess that the wisdom of God "reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly."—*Wisd.* 8: 1.

2. *To his Son, Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ is the true Son of God, to him is due the same honor as to God the Father (*John* 5: 23); all creatures in heaven, upon earth, and under the earth

ought to show him the most profound veneration and adoration. But has it been done, and is it done? Ah, no; he came unto his own, and his own received him not.—*John I*: 11. You know how the Jews treated him in the days of his sojourn upon earth; they did not believe in him, they hated and persecuted him; they reviled, mocked, and calumniated him, and at last nailed him to the cross. Afterwards the world became Christian, but how many remained enemies of Christ and persevered in unbelief? Who can count the millions of unbelievers who to this very day trample the cross of Christ under their feet? What do we witness among Christians? Ah, many have become heathens again; yes, worse than heathens ever were. They do not believe in Christ, they deny his Divinity, and revile him as an impostor. They hate him so intensely that if he walked visibly on earth, they would crucify him as formerly the Jews did; hence, their hatred of Christianity, and especially of the Catholic Church.

Will it always remain so? Will our Divine Saviour never receive the homage due to him as God-Man? Will the time never come when the Father shall glorify his Son?—*John* 12: 28. Yes, it will come on the day of general judgment. Then Christ will appear, not as a weak child, but in power and majesty. He will appear, not in the form of a servant, but in the splendor of his Divine dignity; Jews and Pagans, the just and the unjust, angels and devils, will confess with Peter: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!" Ah, what terror, anguish, and despair for sinners and unbelievers, when they shall see him whom they now revile and blaspheme. Yes, the general judgment day will be one of perfect triumph for Jesus Christ. The Father will glorify his Son before heaven and earth; the elect and the reprobate will pay him homage, the former full of joy and beatitude, the latter full of anguish and despair. Yes, the great day of the last judgment must come that God may glorify his Son.

3. *To men.* The pious frequently share in this world the lot of their Divine Lord; they are frequently despised, persecuted, and abused. Examples: The Apostles, Martyrs, and faithful Catholics of our time. They themselves do not wish to be anything in this world, they are humble and seek to practice virtue in secret. How many austerities, exterior and interior, do they not impose upon themselves, how many good works do they not perform of which the world hears nothing!

The wicked, on the contrary, are highly esteemed, they are decorated with badges of honor, monuments are erected to them, some are almost deified. Many of them well understand how to hide their wickedness, to cover their pernicious plans, intri-

gues, and crimes, with the mantle of virtue, carrying with them to the grave the name of honest men, though in reality they were steeped in iniquity.

Is virtue to be for ever suppressed? Is it to be hidden evermore? Is vice to be ever in honor? It cannot be. Is it compatible with the holiness and justice of God? Impossible. God owes it to sinners, as well as to the just, to show them to the whole world in their true light, as they really are. This will be done on the general judgment day. Everything will be made manifest. "Nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known."—*Matt.* 10: 26. The whole world will see what every one thought and desired during life, what they said and did; all things, even the most secret thoughts and actions, with all their circumstances, will be brought to light. What joy, what consolation, what glory for the good! What disgrace, confusion, and terror for the wicked! But, O Lord, it is just, for this is due to thy friends and servants; it is due also to sinners, thy enemies.

PERORATION.

The belief in a general judgment rests upon a solid basis. Jews, Christians, and Pagans give testimony to this important truth. God himself, the Eternal Truth, has revealed it to man, and has written it in his heart so deeply that it has never been obliterated. A general judgment must take place, for God, in a certain sense, owes it to himself to justify his conduct and his wisdom before the whole world; he owes it to his Son, that he may receive the honor and glory due to him; he owes it to all men, the good and the bad, that all may publicly receive what they deserve. Let us not only believe in a general judgment, but live in such a manner that we may look forward to it with holy joy, hoping to obtain our place among the elect. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.

They shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.—Luke 21: 27.

With this Sunday the time of Advent begins. *Advent* means *a coming*, namely, the coming of Jesus into the world. This coming is twofold; one was accomplished when Christ became man and appeared in the world; the other will take place at the end of time, when Christ shall come as Judge. The Church to-day presents this twofold coming of Christ to our view: the first coming, by this time of Advent, which she appointed as a preparation for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord; and the second by the gospel, which treats of the end of the world and the last judgment. We ought to consider seriously the second coming of Christ at the last judgment, that we may profit by his first coming, which he accomplished for our Redemption. The Ecclesiastical Year also begins on this Sunday. That you may know what the Ecclesiastical Year is, and how you ought to employ it for your salvation, I shall answer to-day the two following questions:

I. What is the Ecclesiastical Year?
II. What are its divisions?

PART I.

The Ecclesiastical Year is,

1. *The space of one year,*
2. *In which the Church represents to us the mysteries of Redemption, by means of holy seasons and festivals, and,*
3. *The fruits of which she applies to us.*

1. *The space of one year.* The Civil Year begins with the first day of January, but the Ecclesiastical with the *first Sunday of Advent.* Why this difference? The Civil Year accommodates itself to the course of nature, and begins on the first day of January, because from this point of time the four seasons of the year, together with Civil affairs, can best be regulated and computed. But the Ecclesiastical Year, which is occupied with the affair of our eternal salvation, begins with Ad-

vent, because this is the beginning of our Redemption. The first day of Advent was the day immediately after the fall of our first parents, when God promised them a Redeemer. *Gen.* 3: 15. Since the Ecclesiastical Year represents the work of our Redemption it must begin with the season during which the Redeemer was promised to mankind, namely with Advent. But our Holy Mother the Church cannot commence Advent on the first day of January, because, according to an ancient tradition, the birthday of Christ falls on the 25th day of December, and there must be a preparation for that day, just as there was for the coming of our Redeemer in the four thousand years of the Old Testament. In memory of these four thousand years Advent embraces four weeks, after which the feast of the Nativity of our Lord is solemnized.

2. *During the year the Church represents the mysteries of Redemption, by means of holy seasons and festivals.* The Jews had holy seasons and feasts throught the year, by which they were reminded of special graces and benefits of God, as well as of their duties towards him. We need not therefore wonder that we Christians also have holy seasons and festivals. The Church earnestly desires us to keep constantly before our minds all that Christ has done for our Redemption. For this purpose she every year causes the principal mysteries of Redemption to pass in review before our minds, perpetually proclaiming to us: Behold, your divine Saviour has done all this to redeem and save you.

Thus the Ecclesiastical Year, with its holy seasons and feasts, is an impressive, ever-returning representation of the work of our Redemption by Christ, an open book, as it were, in which every one, even the unlearned, can read all the mysteries by which our Redemption has been accomplished. As the Church represents these mysteries every year anew, they can never pass into oblivion.

3. *The fruits of which she applies to us.* The holy seasons and feasts are not only a commemoration of what Jesus did and suffered for us, but they are also seasons of grace, which are intended for our salvation just as much as are the mysteries on which they are based. The Incarnation and Nativity of our Saviour were replete with graces for man. So were his sufferings, his Circumcision, his Epiphany, his fasting and death, his Resurrection, Ascension, and the sending of the Holy Ghost. These mysteries are also replete with graces for man to-day. The reason is, because the Church renews continually the sacrifice by which Jesus Christ accomplished our Redemption. For, as every action of Christ referred to his sacrifice on the cross, so the holy seasons and feasts, by which the Church represents to us every year the events of the history of the Redemption, are in union with the

holy sacrifice of the mass, and derive from it their value. If we had not the sacrifice of the mass, the holy seasons and feasts of the Ecclesiastical Year would, indeed, be nothing else than empty commemorations of the mysteries of our Redemption, and consequently dry channels, because they would not be connected with the source from which grace flows into them.

But if we wish the Ecclesiastical Year, with its holy seasons and feasts, to be full of grace and salutary for us, we must do our part. Divine grace is the working of God in our souls. But God will not act in spite of our free will. It is our duty to coöperate. When Jesus Christ came into the world his birth brought grace immediately only to the pious shepherds and the sages from the East; the citizens of Bethlehem, Herod, and the high-priests were left empty-handed. Jesus died on the cross; his sacrifice was a source of grace for his disciples and the penitent thief; for the unrepenting Jews his blood flowed in vain. At Pentecost only his disciples and the few who believed in him received the Holy Ghost; all others who persevered in unbelief remained vessels of divine wrath. It is the same to-day; the holy seasons and feasts of the Ecclesiastical Year bring grace and salvation to us if we celebrate them with well-prepared hearts. Therefore every holy season and feast is an admonition to us to cleanse our hearts from sin, to make good resolutions, and with renewed zeal to labor for our salvation.

Part II.

The Ecclesiastical Year is divided into three cycles of holy seasons and feasts:

1. *Christmas,*
2. *Easter, and*
3. *Pentecost.*

1. *The Christmas Cycle.* This represents the time of the Old Testament, from the first promise of the Redeemer until his coming into the world. Its principal sentiment is this: "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting"—*John* 3: 16. The principal feasts of this cycle are Christmas, on which day Christ appeared to the Jews, and the Epiphany, on which he appeared to the Gentiles. Advent is the preparation for Christmas; during Advent, then, we should make the sad state of mankind under the Old Law, the longing of all the just for the Redeemer, and the mercy of God in giving a Redeemer to the sinful human race, the subjects of our pious meditations. At

the same time we must not neglect to cleanse our souls from sin, and lead lives of penan ce, to which we are exhorted in the gospels of the second, third, and fourth Sundays of Advent.

In the subsequent festivity, which extends to Septuagesima Sunday, we ought to meditate on the life of Jesus up to his thirtieth year, especially on his hidden life, his humility, self-denial, obedience, and fervor in prayer, and endeavor to imitate him in these virtues.

2. *The Easter Cycle* represents to us the bitter passion and death of Jesus, his Resurrection and Ascension, and reminds us of the words of the Apostle: "Jesus was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification."—*Rom.* 4: 25. The principal feast of this cycle is Easter, with Holy Week; for at this time Christ accomplished the work of our Redemption. Easter is in the Ecclesiastical Year what the consecration is in the mass. Without the consecration, which is essential to the holy sacrifice, everything that precedes it would be without a definite object; without it there would be no communion, and consequently everything that follows would be valueless and meaningless. In like manner, all holy seasons and feasts of the whole Ecclesiastical Year depend on Easter, and from it they derive their value. Without Easter, the Nativity of Christ would profit nothing; without Easter we should have no Pentecost, no feasts of Mary or of the saints. "Easter is the feast of feasts, the celebration of celebrations, surpassing in splendor and solemnity all other feasts, not only human and civil, but also all the other feasts of our Lord, just as the sun outshines all other luminous bodies."—*Greg. Naz.*

The preparatory celebration begins with Septuagesima Sunday, and lasts nine weeks; the subsequent celebration embraces the six Sundays after Easter. The exercises during this cycle are: Meditation on the passion of our Lord, interior and exterior mortification, reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and spiritual resurrection, according to the admonition of St. Paul: "Christ, our pasch, is sacrificed; therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—*I. Cor.* 5: 7, 8.

3. *The Pentecost Cycle* represents the time from the first Pentecost Sunday at Jerusalem till the end of time, and is the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever, the spirit of truth."—*John* 14: 16. The principal feast of this cycle is Pentecost, on which the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles and the first believers, and made his permanent

abode in the Church, to teach her all truth, and to guide and protect her all days, even to the consummation of the world. The preparatory celebration embraces the ten days from the Ascension of Christ to Pentecost; the subsequent celebration continues to the end of the Ecclesiastical Year, viz., to the first Sunday of Advent. According to the example of the Apostles, we must prepare ourselves for Pentecost by interior recollection and fervent prayer. We must also cleanse our souls from all sins, that the Holy Ghost may come and dwell in us with his sevenfold gifts and graces. After Pentecost we must guard against every sin, that the Holy Ghost may remain with us and communicate his graces to us.

PERORATION.

These are the three periods or holy seasons into which the Ecclesiastical Year is divided. The Church brings before our minds every year in these cycles the whole history of our Redemption, exhorting us continually to have Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Redemption, always before our eyes, to study closely the work of our Redemption, and in grateful love to make an offering of ourselves to him. Therefore, on this day firmly resolve to spend the Ecclesiastical Year as becomes Christians. Ponder well the mysteries which the Church in her holy seasons and festivals reprcsents to your minds; make the corresponding holy exercises, and labor daily for your salvation, that Christ may be formed in you more and more, and that you may say with the Apostle: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."—*Gal.* 2: 20. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

They shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.—Luke 21: 27.

Among all civilized nations now-a-days juries are established to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused according to the evidence. There is a presiding officer who conducts the case;

witnesses, who give evidence; a state attorney, who endeavors to sustain the accusation; lawyers, who try to weaken it; jurymen, who, after hearing the accusation, the evidence, and the defence, bring in their verdict of guilty or not guilty, and lastly, the judge, who, if the accused has been found guilty, determines the punishment according to law. The whole transaction is public; and whoever wishes may assist at it from beginning to end.

Nobody wishes to be brought before the court; for even if innocent, it would not be desirable to be indicted. But how repugnant soever it may be to us, before one court we must all without exception appear. This court is the last and general judgment, of which the gospel of this day speaks. All of us, who are now assembled here in this church, must appear before that grand jury, and the whole world will hear what good or evil we have done secretly or publicly during life. May God grant that the trial which is to determine our fate for eternity may have a favorable issue. It will if we have—

I. Witnesses who will testify in our favor,
II. A competent counsel,
III. Well-disposed judges.

PART I.

1. *Witnesses who testify in our favor.* If a person be cited before a court to answer a charge, his good or bad character will generally have great weight in influencing both judge and jury. If his character be good, a favorable impression is at once made; but if bad, the presumption of his guilt is forthwith established. Then comes the evidence of the several witnesses. According to this the jury must of course give their verdict. If the witnesses side with the accused, and assert his innocence, a verdict of "not guilty" will be brought in. But if, on the contrary, the evidence go against the accused, he may look for a verdict of "guilty." Somewhat similar to this will be the trial of each individual on the day of judgment.

(*a.*) First of all, our character will be taken into consideration. Who will give testimony to this? Our temporal and spiritual superiors; but especially the pastors of our souls, who preached to us, heard our confessions, and administered to us the graces of religion. Every parish priest must give the Divine Judge an account of his parishioners during the time he had the care of their souls. Now, if the testimony be: Such a one frequented the saloons more than the church, confessed and communicated scarcely once a year, was a drunkard, a gambler, a blasphemer, a bad father, a faithless husband; or, such a one was vain, worldly-minded, fond of dress, looked oftener into the mirror

than into her conscience, kept bad company, brought shame and disgrace on her family; if your character be such, what can you expect? Do you think that Jesus, your Judge, and Mary, his holy Mother, your guardian angel and your patron saint, will look upon you with friendly eyes? No, no, no. But if you have a good character, you will be consoled on that day, and may confidently hope that your case will have a favorable issue.

(*b.*) Witnesses will appear for and against you. I shall mention only two; their sole ambition was your salvation; they took a great interest in you, and kept a loving watch over you. One was your angel guardian, whom God selected for you whilst you were yet in your mother's womb; the other your patron saint, whom the Church gave you at your baptism. If that last great trial should take place now, what would your guardian angel and patron saint say abont you? Perhaps they would testify against you, and say: Ah! he caused us great grief and trouble, and yet we accomplished nothing. The guardian angel would perhaps say: I inspired him with good thoughts, warned him against levity, exhorted him to virtue, but all to no purpose; he despised my inspirations, gave himself up to dissipation, and I was obliged to witness the most abominable deeds day and night. The patron saint will say: I gave him the best example, and obtained for him many graces from God, but all in vain; his wicked conduct caused me affliction and disgraced my name. God forbid that our angel guardian and patron saint should give such evidence against us! But how calm and tranquil shall we be at that last grand trial, and with what consolation we shall look forward to the final decision, if our guardian angel and patron saint can say only good things of us; if before God and man they testify that we honored and revered them; that we listened to their inspirations; that we walked in the fear of God; or, if we made a false step, that we at once and earnestly did penance. If we wish that trial to have a favorable termination let it be our most important and only care to deserve a good character, and to obtain witnesses who will give evidence in our favor.

Part II.

A competent counsel or attorney. At every trial the accusation against a person, as determined at the preliminary proceedings, will first be stated; then the witnesses for and against will be heard, after which the state attorney tries to establish the guilt of the accused, and finally demands that he be declared guilty by the jury. No matter how favorable the testimony given by the witnesses, the state attorney presses the accusation and endeavors to obtain a verdict of "guilty." He is, indeed, one whom every defendant has reason to fear.

The defendant, however, must not be treated unjustly; therefore the law ordains that he may choose counsel for himself or that one be appointed for him by the court. This counsel also plays an important part at every trial; if he take a warm interest in his client and defend his case skillfully, he may succeed in convincing the jury of his innocence. Many a man owes his acquittal to his counsel. But if the counsel be incompetent, the case is half lost, and it would be almost a miracle if the accused were acquitted.

What has been said, is applicable to the general judgment. There we shall all be accused, no matter how we may have lived. Every one will be accused with regard to his thoughts, words, and actions upon earth. Then the state attorney will make his appearance as accuser, and move that the sentence of "guilty" be pronounced upon us. And who will this state attorney be? He will not be like the state attorneys in our courts who are men and mortals like ourselves, who have a sense of justice and are swayed by feelings of compassion. No, not such as these, but man's zealous enemy, the devil. This evil spirit, our worst enemy from the beginning, will exert himself to depict our lives in such a way that we shall seem fit only for hell. He will bring all our sins, great and small, to light, magnify them, and represent them to be greater and more deserving of punishment than they really are. Not content with this, he will misrepresent our virtues and good works, and stamp them as sins. He will feign anxiety only for justice and truth, and pretend that he would cheerfully grant us heaven if his love of justice did not compel him to demand and insist upon our condemnation.

Against such an accuser, a competent defender is surely necessary. But who is this to be? A good consience. St. John says: "If our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God."—*I. John* 3: 21. Yes, if we have a good conscience, we shall confound the devil with all his accusations. If he cast up sins which we have not committed, conscience will say: "Witness, all ye men and angels, and thou, too, O omniscient God, whether these sins rest on me." If he lay to our charge sins which we have really committed, but for which we have done penance, conscience will again say: "Look at me, all ye, and see whether I am still contaminated with the sins of which he accuses me; they have been confessed and satisfied for; I am pure!" If he find fault with our virtues and good works, conscience will reply: "See, here it is written, in all my exercises of virtue and in all my good works I had a good intention, and always prayed with heart and lips; I did all for the love of God, all for his greater glory." Yes, truly, if we have a good conscience, we need not fear the day of judgment; a good conscience is the best defender, one that will win our case and compel our judge to acquit us.

But, if a good conscience is a good defender, a bad conseience is inversely an equally bad one. A bad conscience, instead of defending, will accuse the sinner, reproach him for not having listened to its voice, and for having remained obdurate to all admonitions and warnings. He will fare worse than Baltassar, who, seeing the mysterious hand that wrote his sentence on the wall was so terrified that the "joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees struck one against the other."—*Dan.* 5: 6. He will cry out with Cain: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon."—*Gen.* 4: 13. Let us, then, be solicitous for a good conscience, and if at present it be contaminated with sin, let us cleanse it by the baptism of penance, and keep it undefiled, that at the last day it may defend us and procure our acquittal.

Part III.

Well-disposed judges. We may look upon the jury as so many judges, for they judge, and pronounce the sentence of "guilty" or "not guilty," as the case may require. The judge is a man versed in the law; he applies it and determines the punishment provided by it. We might think that it is of little moment how judge and jury may be disposed towards the accused, because they are obliged to decide according to their conscience and the law. This is very true, but man is man, and it cannot be denied that the opinion and feelings of the judge towards the accused may exercise a great influence upon his judgment. It is possible also that the jury, if they be particularly favorable to the accused, will not pronounce him guilty; for a sympathetic heart exercises a great influence upon the judgment. Even the judge, if he be well-disposed towards the accused, may diminish the punishment as much as possible, thus using the latitude which the law allows him. If judge and jury be ill-disposed towards him, he may fare badiy; their aversion may be the cause of his being declared guilty and of his being punished to the full extent of the law.

Can this be said of that last great trial? Yes, to a certain extent, for here there are also judges on whose sentiments towards us will depend our doom. Our judge will be Jesus Christ, "for the Father hath given all judgment to the Son."—*John* 5: 22. Our judges will be the Apostles, as Jesus himself declares: "Amen I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."—*Matt.* 19: 28. If these judges, Jesus and the Apostles, be well disposed towards us, we shall fare well; we shall be acquitted. Who would believe that those who enjoy the love and friendship

of Jesus and of his Apostles can be condemned? But can we hope for this friendship and love? Yes, if we have endeavored to lead good, virtuous, Christian lives, for Jesus himself says: "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you."—*John* 15: 14. He will receive us most graciously on the last day, especially if during life we perform works of mercy. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."—*Matt.* 5: 7. Compare *Matt.* 25: 34, etc. But he who transgresses the commandments of God, lives in sin without doing penance, and treats his fellow-men unjustly, incurs the displeasure of Jesus and his Apostles, and may expect on the day of judgment the sentence of condemnation. "According to thy hardness, and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God."—*Rom.* 2: 5.

PERORATION.

Have always before your mind the last day and the general judgment, and live in such a way that you need not fear it. Be intent on gaining witnesses that will speak in your favor. Lead a good, virtuous life, and do what your pastors tell you from the pulpit and in the confessional. Preserve a good conscience, and if you should be so unhappy as to defile it by grievous sin, hasten without delay to cleanse it by a good confession. Be faithful servants and followers of Christ, love him above all things, and perform as many works of mercy as you can; then you may look forward to the day of the general judgment without fear, for it will be for you the day, not only of your acquittal, but of your glory and complete triumph before the whole world. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF ADVENT.

Now is the hour for us to rise from sleep.—Rom. 13: 11.

In about four weeks we shall solemnize Christmas. It is the first feast of our Lord occurring in the Ecclesiastical Year. The holy season of Advent, which begins to-day, is appointed as a time of preparation for the worthy celebration of the Christmas

festival. The Church admonishes us to begin this preparation at once, addressing us in the words of St. Paul: *Now is the hour for us to rise from sleep.* Some of us have, perhaps, passed the last Ecclesiastical Year in the sleep of sin; to-day, the beginning of a new year, it is for us to rise from this dangerous and pernicious sleep, and earnestly begin the work of our salvation. How this can and must be done I shall explain to you to-day, showing you that we must sanctify Advent—

I. By pious meditations,
II. By good works.

Part I.

During Advent we ought to consider,

1. *The sad aspect of everything before Christ,*
2. *The great longing of the better-disposed for the promised Redeemer.*

1. In Advent the days are short, and become shorter every day till Christmas. All nature, even in our temperate zones, is dreary and benumbed, lying, as it were, in the slumber of death: everything around us looks desolate, clouds flit across the sky, and the birds have gone to the South. This is a figure of the time before Christ.

In the course of time men lost the knowledge of God more and more, and fell into the most horrible idolatry. They deified men and beasts, and adored them; they made for themselves images of wood, metal, and stones, and worshiped them as gods. And what was their notion of their deities? They did not consider them omnipotent, holy or good, but beings who, subject like men to a blind fate, gave themselves up to the basest vices, who neither could nor would help men, nay, frequently brought evil and destruction upon them. Of many virtues, such as humility, love of enemies, mercy, self-denial, and mortification, they had no conception; the greatest vices and crimes, such as suicide, revenge, and impurity, they held to be, in many cases, not only allowable, but even considered them as virtues; and a great part of the worship of their gods consisted in deeds of murder and lust.

Things were a little better with the Jews, but among them also many errors prevailed, and their divine worship had degenerated into empty forms, and resembled a nut without a kernel. Their thoughts were bent upon earthly things: pride, ambition, hyprocrisy, uncharitableness, intolerance, and many other vices

were prevalent everywhere. Such was the state of affairs before Christ. The words of the Prophet applied both to Jews and Gentiles: "There is no truth, and there is no mercy, and there is no knowledge of God in the land. Cursing and lying, and killing, and theft, and adultery have overflowed, and blood hath touched blood." In time, things grew worse; and if Christ had not appeared and checked the evil, unbelief and debauchery would have entirely destroyed the feeble germs of good, and would have made the world a hideous den of fiends in human shape. Consider this terrible degeneracy of mankind, and how unhappy you would be but for the Redeemer; be thankful to him for arresting this boundless evil and renewing the face of the earth. Vow to him obedience, fidelity and love.

2. God had promised men a Redeemer, who would take away the evil that rested upon them, and bring them grace and salvation. He made this promise to our first parents when he cursed the serpent, saying, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."—*Gen.* 3: 15. God frequently repeated this promise by the mouth of his prophets, and in the course of time he announced more clearly who that Redeemer should be, and what graces men should receive through him. Thus he says by the Prophet Isaias: "Say to the faint-hearted: Take courage and fear not; behold, God himself will come, and will save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free."—*Is.* 35: 4--6.

These prophecies were known, not only among the Jews, but in a great measure also among the Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles, at least the better-disposed, longed ardently for the promised Redeemer, and said with the prophet: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour." This longing increased with time, when one century after another went by without satisfying it, and spiritual misery became greater.

We are to represent to ourselves during Advent this longing and desire of mankind for the Redeemer, and excite in ourselves likewise a fervent desire for his coming. Jesus has, indeed, already come, but it will profit us nothing if he does not come into our hearts. If we wish him to come, we must manifest a desire for him. He who has not this desire, does not do what is required of him in order to share in the grace of Redemption; he does not bring forth fruits worthy of penance, and is, therefore, in the same situation as if Christ had not yet become man and appeared upon earth. There are many Christians who closely resemble

the carnal Jews. If Jesus would bring at Christmas a few hundred dollars, or give them the prospect of a lucrative office, or a life of pleasure, they would desire his advent most earnestly, but they understand naught of the supernatural and spiritual good which he offers them; therefore they have no longing desire for him. Oh, may none of us be of the number of those Christians who are dead to Christianity! Oh, may we all have a fervent desire for our divine Saviour, and by good works prepare ourselves for his coming!

Part II.

We are to sanctify Advent by exercises

1. *Of penance,*
2. *Of prayer, and*
3. *Of works of mercy to the poor.*

1. *Advent is a time of Penance.* The first Advent of four thousand years was a time of penance. For this reason God exhorted the people so often to do penance.—*Isaias* 1: 16; *Jerem.* 25: 5. John the Baptist preached penance: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Jesus himself declared: "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." The Church exhorts us to do penance, and for this reason she forbids the solemnizing of marriage during Advent, and uses the violet color, the color of penance, at the divine offices. As we are all sinners, and from our childhood have frequently offended God, penance is absolutely necessary for us; by penance we prepare for our Saviour the way into our hearts. Let us see, then, wherein consists the penance which we are to perform during Advent.

(*a.*) *In the cleansing of our conscience from sin by a good confession.* All who have heretofore lived in the state of sin should now at least do penance. Oh, that all, especially those who know themselves to be guilty of mortal sins, would worthily receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist during this holy time of Advent!

(*b.*) *In interior and exterior mortifications.* Interior mortifications are: The curbing of our passions, the extirpation of our inordinate inclinations, especially of vanity, pride, worldly-mindedness, avarice, uncharitableness, anger, and self-love. Exterior mortifications are: The diminution of meat and drink, the guarding of the senses, especially the eyes, the ears, and the tongue, and abstaining from worldly enjoyments. We must practice these interior and exterior mortifications, partly to prevent future sins, partly to satisfy for the temporal punishment due to sins already committed.

2. Advent is not only a time of penance, *but also of prayer;* for penance and prayer go together, and are inseparable; there never was a true penitent who was not zealous in prayer; there never was a saint who was not given to prayer. Examples: David, who, as he says himself, "labored in groanings, and every night watered his couch with tears."—*Ps.* 6: 7. Paul, who shut himself up in Damascus, and spent three days and three nights in prayer, neither eating nor drinking.—*Acts* 9: 9, etc. Mary Magdalen, who retired into a cavern near Marseilles, in ancient Gaul, where she devoted thirty years—till the end of her life—to exercises of devotion. The Church wishes us also to practice prayer, especially during Advent. Instead of the *Ite, missa est,* that is "You may go, mass is over," which the priest says, turned toward the people at the end of mass, he now says, turned towards the altar, *Benedicamus Domino,* that is "Let us bless the Lord," by which the Church intimates her wish that we should follow the custom of the early Christians who on penitential days did not leave the house of God immediately after the services, but remained for some time in prayer.

Pray, then, during Advent with greater zeal and fervor than heretofore. If you have been careless in saying your morning and evening prayers, resolve to be punctual in saying them henceforth. Go to church on Sundays and holidays and, if possible, on week-days. Say the *Angelus* three times a day, morning, noon, and evening, because the principal mystery of Advent, the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is commemorated in this prayer. As often as possible spend some time in spiritual reading.

3. Advent is a time of penance, and therefore a proper time for works of mercy, for they are exercises of penance. Christ became man and appeared upon earth a poor, helpless child; he lived for thirty-three years in poverty and suffering, and at last died on the cross. He made all these sacrifices to atone for our sins, to reconcile us with God, and to restore us to his friendship. What love on the part of our Redeemer! Should not his love and mercy induce us to be charitable towards our neighbor, and to perform works of mercy? If God sees that we are charitable and merciful towards the poor and needy, assisting them in their necessities he will show us mercy and pardon our sins. Hence the Archangel Raphael said to Tobias: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold; for alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting."—*Tob.* 12: 8, 9. Redeem your sins by alms and works of mercy to the poor. If you deprive yourselves during Advent of certain dainties which are not necessary, and refrain from worldly enjoyments, you can save more or less, and these savings should be given to the poor.

PERORATION.

Sanctify Advent, then, as becomes good Christians. Consider how pitiable would be our condition if Jesus Christ had not become man and redeemed us; thank him for the great sacrifice which he made for our Redemption. Make use of the pious exercises which the Church prescribes and recommends. Receive the holy Sacraments of Penance and of the Blessed Eucharist; mortify yourselves interiorly and exteriorly, to atone for your sins, to prevent a relapse, and to make progress in virtue. Pray fervently, and perform as many works of mercy as you can. If you sanctify Advent in such a manner, it will become to you a time of grace and salvation. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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7. MORAL SKETCH.

MANY CHRISTIANS TRY TO DISSUADE THEMSELVES FROM THE FEAR OF JUDGMENT.

They shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.—Luke 21 : 27.

In reading for us twice a year the gospel on the last judgment, namely, on the first Sunday of Advent and on the last Sunday after Pentecost, the beginning and the end of the Ecclesiastical year, our Holy Mother the Church has, beyond doubt, the intention of frequently calling to our mind the advice in Ecclesiasticus: "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."—7 : 40. For this reason pastors of souls frequently speak of this judgment, describe its severity, show its consequences, and direct our attention to the saints, who, though their conscience reproached them with nothing, trembled at the thought of appearing before the tribunal of the omniscient God, there to give an account of even every idle word. And how do many Christians act when they hear of judgment? They remain cold and indifferent, never thinking of changing their worldly, sinful life. And why this indifference? We shall to-day investigate the cause. Many Christians try to dissuade themselves from the fear of judgment by saying,

I. We are not so bad as you would make us think,
II. The judgment is not so rigorous as you describe it to be.

PART I.

1. *There are some who think themselves better than they really are.* Their conscience does not reproach them with great crimes, such as rape, theft, murder, fornication, adultery, etc.; hence they believe that they are good, and have no reason to fear judgment. But how they deceive themselves! "Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart."—*I. Kings* 16 : 7. Exterior righteousness is, indeed, good and necessary for salvation, but it is not sufficient. The most necessary requisite for holiness is a well-disposed mind, with a heart that hates and detests evil, and sincerely loves God above all things. Where this interior righteousness is wanting, the outward is a dry, shriveled nut without a kernel; it is tinsel brass, without value. Only consider the Scribes and the Pharisees. Was not their outward conduct blameless, even praiseworthy? They prayed much, fasted austerely, gave alms, and were zealous for the law. But how does Christ, who knew their hearts, judge them? He asserts that with a justice such as that of the Scribes and Pharisees we can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. And why not? Because the Scribes and Pharisees were devoted only to outward justice, whilst they nourished in their hearts the basest passions, such as pride, ambition, hatred, envy. Wherefore our Lord compares them to "whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness"—*Matt.* 23 : 27.

How many a Christian resembles these Scribes and Pharisees! Outwardly his conduct is without fault, without blemish, but how does he look inwardly? How full of wicked, revengeful thoughts, impure desires, vain wishes, ambitious projects? How uncharitable to his fellow-men, especially to those who are of no use to him; what stratagems and tricks he makes use of to undermine their happiness! How inclined to disregard his conscience and the commandments of God when there is a question of the gratification of his passions! If such a Christian thinks himself righteous, and has no fear of the judgment of God, he woefully deceives himself. O Lord, preserve us from such a justice, which deserves the sentence of damnation!

2. *There are Christians who know that they are faulty, but they believe that their good works will cancel their sins and justify them before the tribunal of God.* They say their prayers, go regularly to church, get masses said, and give alms. They expect by these pious exercises so to propitiate Almighty God that, notwithstanding many secret sins, as well as open ones, of injustice, backbiting, etc., he will somehow grant them the grace to die peni-

tent, and thus to gain the reward promised the faithful, viz., eternal life. But such persons sadly deceive themselves. As laudable as good works are, without radical penance and amendment of life they have no value before God. Christ himself teaches us this truth in the parable of the vine and the branches.—*John* 15: 4, 5. He who lives in the state of sin, and therefore is not united with Christ by sanctifying grace, can do nothing meritorious for heaven, no more than a branch cut off from the vine can bear fruit. If you had the virtues of the greatest saints, and performed works good in themselves without number, yet if you lived in a state of sin, you could not stand before the judgment seat of God. Nay, if you should appear before God with numberless good works, but defiled with only one mortal sin, all your good works would profit you nothing; on account of that one mortal sin you would be damned for ever. Consider this important truth, and be not so foolish as to lull your conscience to sleep by the thought that God, on account of your good works, will overlook your sins. There is no one now in hell who has not done some good, and many a great deal of good, in their lifetime. Nothing defiled can enter heaven; even the least fault must be atoned for, either here, or hereafter in purgatory, before the gate of heaven is opened. Be diligent, therefore, in performing good works, but above all, see that your heart is not contaminated with mortal sin.

3. *Lastly, there are some who avoid evil, and perform some good works, but they will nevertheless be rejected.* And why? Because in avoiding evil and in doing good, they have not God and his holy will in view, but themselves, their own temporal advantage or disadvantage. Whatever is not done from veneration, love, and obedience to God, has no value for heaven. Are you astonished at this assertion? Suppose, to use a familiar argument, that a laborer works the whole day, not in your field, but in another man's, and in the evening comes to you and demands his wages; what would you say? would you not say, Go and ask him to pay you in whose field you have worked? Of course such a laborer could not compel you to pay him He did not work for you; you have nothing to do with him or his work. In the same way God cannot be expected to reward us for work not done for him nor according to his will.

Therefore Christ says of those who, like hypocrites, give alms, pray, and fast in order to be seen by men, that they have already received their reward.—*Matt.* 6: 2—8. Some abstain from impurity, theft, and other vices, but why? Their motive is ambition, that nobody may be able to say anything against them. Some perform good works and pious exercises, especially works of Christian charity, that thay may be praised by men. Some are very active in their avocation; they work with zeal and diligence

and save money, Why? That they may be rich and respected some day. They do not think of God; for the love of him they move neither hand nor foot. Their motives in doing this or that good, or in avoiding this or that evil, are natural and temporal. How they deceive themselves if they imagine that they will one day be rewarded for these actions. They resemble the man who was continually drawing water and pouring it into a sieve. It would not hold, and he could never fill it. From this you see how ill-advised those are who dissuade themselves from the fear of judgment, because they will not think themselves as bad as they really are. Ah, if even truly pious Christians tremble at the thought of the judgment of God, how is it possible for those who are anything but pious to look forward to that judgment without fear? But some will say, the judgment will not be so rigorous as it is generally described. Let us see what really is the case.

PART II.

You may hear careless Christians say: *The last judgment will not be half so severe as it is represented to be, for God is good, and will not demand a rigorous account.* Doubtless, for many it would be well if it were so, and for their sakes it is a pity that their doctrine is flatly contradicted by Holy Writ and tradition. What will God do with you when you stand before his tribunal? Will he, perhaps, say: Behold, you are a sinner, and not fit for heaven, first go and confess your sins and be absolved, then I shall judge you. Alas! there will be no confessional at the last judgment; God will judge you as you are when you arrive there; whether you be good or bad, he will render to you according to your works.—*Rom.* 2: 6. Tell me: Can God reward the wicked as he does the good? If he can, he is neither holy nor just; not holy, because good and evil would then be all the same to him; not just, because justice never confers the same reward on good and evil. But it is sheer blasphemy to think thus of God.

But you will say: *I do not mean this; I grant the holiness and justice of God, but I give his goodness and mercy also their due. I trust in them; and on account of them I hope that God will not reject me on the day of judgment.* You mean to say in other words that as long as you live upon earth, however great a sinner you may be, you hope and trust in the mercy of God. It is true, the mercy of God is infinite and eternal, but for you the application of that mercy must be restricted to time. Your hope and confidence are vain as soon as you extend them beyond the veil of time to the judgment-seat of God. God's justice alone will sit on the judgment-seat, and do its part unswervingly. As God shall then find you, he will judge you; if you are good, he will admit you into heaven; but if wicked, he will condemn you to hell.

But you will say: *It is not in respect to sins of malice and great crimes that I think of God as a gracious judge; but only with regard to the weakness and frailties to which all men are more or less subject. God, our heavenly Father, will surely not condemn us on account of frailties.* Now listen to what I have to say: True, sins of malice are heavier in the scales than sins of frailty, but you must know that sins of frailty also lead to damnation. Was it not a sin of weakness which Heli committed in rearing his children so badly? and it is the opinion of all that Heli was damned. Was it not a sin of weakness which Peter committed when he denied his Master? If he had died without doing penance for it, who doubts that he would have perished eternally? Was it not a sin of weakness in Pilate to condemn Jesus to death? Whither did this sin of weakness conduct Pilate? Into hell. And what do you call sins of weakness or human frailties? Perhaps your most abominable debaucheries, your ever-returning drunkenness, your appropriation of the goods of others, your curses and blasphemies. If you approach the judgment-seat of God with such frailties you will surely be damned.

2. But another will say: *If God will demand so exact an account, no one will be saved. Most people live as we do. God would be obliged then to damn all if he were to damn us, and heaven would be a void.* To the first I would reply: It is not true that most Christians live as you do, who speak thus. There are now, as at all times, many who live in the fear and love of God, who never commit a mortal sin; and many more by far who rise again after their fall and do penance. Heaven is for these, and it must be immense to contain so great a number. To the second I reply: God is just, and will remain just, and will reward the good and punish the wicked, no matter how great the number of the latter may be. God will damn millions of men as well as one, if they deserve damnation. Do you not know that God destroyed the whole human race by the deluge, eight souls alone excepted? And if these eight souls had not been just, they, too, would have perished. Do you not know that all the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha perished by a rain of fire and brimstone, Lot only with his wife and two daughters excepted?

Let no sinner console himself with the thought: *Others are no better than I, God will not condemn me.* It is probable that the people of Noe's time, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, comforted themselves in this manner, but that did not save them, and will save no sinner. Be not therefore of the crowd who live in sin and vice, but foolishly expect to be of the number of the few who walk in the fear of the Lord and in the way of his commandments, for "many are called, but few are chosen."

3. But some will say: *It is certain that Jesus Christ will be our Judge, for we say in the Apostles' Creed: From thence he shall come*

to judge the living and the dead. Jesus is all love and mercy, he came to save, not to condemn sinners. He graciously received Mary Magdalen, that public sinner, and forgave all her sins. He graciously received the adulteress and condemned her not; he even pardoned the thief and murderer on the cross. To this I must reply that such confidence is in contradiction with faith; it is not confidence, but presumption. Jesus is merciful, it is true, but he is merciful only to repentant sinners; he is good to those who are good, or who strive to be good. If Mary Magdalen, and the adulteress, and the thief on the cross, had not been truly penitent, Jesus would have no more forgiven them their sins than he did those of the obdurate Scribes and Pharisees, or those of the other thief on the cross. Does not Christ say: "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish?"—*Luke* 13 : 3. Do you not know that he frequently cried out: "Woe to the Pharisees!" and threatened them with eternal damnation? Moreover, it is certain that the mercy of God rules with a loving sway in this world, but that for those who abuse it, this mercy will in the other world give place to justice.

PERORATION.

Consider all this earnestly, and be not deceived by men who make God like Heli, who was all mercy and indulgence, and had hands only to reward, but none to punish. God's judgment is strict, so strict that we must give an account of every idle word. —*Matt.* 12: 36. "If the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"—*I. Peter* 4: 18. Be not satisfied with an apparent justice, which may suffice before the world, but will not avail before God. Avoid every sin, even the smallest, and if you have sinned, reconcile yourselves with God by true, genuine penance. Make good use of the graces which Jesus procured for you at his first coming for your salvation, that you may look forward to his second coming with joy and a well-grounded hope of his being a gracious Judge. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

EPISTLE. *Romans* 15: 4-13. Brethren: What things soever were written, were written for our learning; that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ: that with one mind, and with one mouth, you may glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, receive one another, as Christ also hath received you unto the honor of God. For I say that Christ Jesus was minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. But that the Gentiles are to glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: Therefore will I confess to thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and will sing to thy name. And again he saith: Rejoice, ye Gentiles, and magnify him, all ye peoples. And again Isaias saith: There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise up to rule the Gentiles, in him the Gentiles shall hope. Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

CHRISTIAN UNITY.

Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another.—Rom. 15: 5.

In the epistle of this day St. Paul exhorts the faithful to unity, mutual forbearance, and love. This admonition was so much the more necessary as the Christians lately converted from Judaism frequently behaved intolerantly and uncharitably towards those converted from Paganism. As the chosen people of God the Jews considered themselves better than the Gentiles; and so those who had embraced Christianity thought they should have preference over the Gentiles who had become Christians. St. Paul proves to them from the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament, that God, through his Son Jesus Christ, called not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles, to the same grace and salvation; that there was consequently no difference between Christians converted from Judaism and those converted from Paganism. All have the

same rights the same graces, the same duties, and must therefore live in peace and unity with one another. Hence the Apostle speaks of Christian unity, and shows that it consists

I. In unity of faith,
II. In community of worship,
III. In mutual love.

PART I.

I. In unity of faith.

1. The Apostle says: *What things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.* Christian unity, then, according to St. Paul, consists, first of all, in believing that all things written in the Sacred Scriptures are written for our instruction, and that we should therefore receive and hold with a believing heart all that God has revealed. In matters of faith there must be no division, no schism, among Christians. We have a beautiful example of the unity of faith in the primitive Christians at Jerusalem. It is said of them: "They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles." *Acts* 2: 42. And again: "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul."—*Acts* 4 : 32.

2. The Apostles always insisted upon unity of faith, and severely denounced innovations and schisms. Hence, St. Paul writes: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you"—*I. Cor.* 1: 10. And again: "If any one preach to you a gospel besides that which you have received, let him be anathema."—*Gal.* 1 : 9. In like manner St. John: "If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him: God speed you."—*II. John* 1 : 10.

3. The Church enjoins this unity of faith upon all her members as an imperative duty. He who rejects but one truth which she proposes to our belief, for instance, the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope, is regarded by her as a Catholic no longer, and is excluded from her communion. The Church can do this, and must do it, for Jesus, her divine Founder, has emphatically said: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17.

Preserve, therefore, unity of faith; submit yourselves to the Church interiorly and exteriorly, with heart and lips, for she is the pillar and ground of truth; what she teaches is the word of God, and in matters of faith she can no more err than the Holy Ghost, under whose guidance she will be to the end of time.

Consider what terrible consequences would befall you if you should refuse her obedience in matters of faith and morals. You would cease to be Catholics and be deprived of all the means of grace; no priest could absolve you, and your eternal damnation would be certain. Consider this well, and preserve unity of faith.

II. In community of worship.

In the epistle of this day the Apostle admonishes us to this community of worship in these words: "Now, the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ: that with one mind and with one mouth you may glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The first Christian congregation at Jerusalem did this, for we read: "They were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers, and continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart. Praising God, and having favor with all the people."—*Acts* 2 : 42—47.

This Christian unity, so far as it consists in a common worship, manifests itself:

1. *In private devotion;* that is, in the devotions which every one performs for himself. He who prays approaches God; so also do all the faithful throughout the world who like him are united with God by prayer. God is the centre of unity for all; here they are all of one heart and one mind, provided they pray with true devotion, no matter how vastly they may differ in regard to their nationality, manner of living or customs. Very touching are the words of the holy Count Eleazar to his wife, who complained that in his absence she so seldom received news of his health. He answered: "You wish to hear of me often: visit Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist, and enter into his Sacred Heart, for you know that there is my abode, and rest assured that you will always find me there." Here you have a means, as easy as it is sure, of uniting yourselves as often as you wish, not only with your relations and with those whose welfare you have especially at heart, but with all the faithful throughout the whole world; only pray devoutly, for by prayer the faithful draw near to God, their heavenly Father.

2. *In family devotion.* If all the members of a family, parents, children, and servants, assemble and say their morning and evening prayers in common, there will be true Christian unity among them; for they are as one in God and his worship, and consequently united with one another; they will enjoy peace of heart, live in concord with one another, and their prayers will

have more efficacy, for where a few are assembled in Christ's name, he is always in their midst. But how is it in those homes wherein family devotion is neglected, in which, morning and evening, neither father nor mother prays with the children, and, what is worse, perhaps does not say a prayer at all? Ah! Christian unity is sadly wanting there, just so surely as family devotion is neglected. There is no religious harmony in such families; faith with them is either weak or already dead; the fire of divine love is extinguished. The spirit of the world, with all its consequences—forgetfulness of God, sin and vice—prevails. And because there is no peace with God, there is no peace either with one's self or with others; consequently ill-humor, disunion, quarrels, contention, and strife prevail.

Fathers and mothers, cultivate earnestly this family devotion, and allow none of your children or servants to absent themselves therefrom without sufficient cause, for by it Christian unity is maintained, and it is accompanied by peace, blessing, and prosperity.

3. *In the Church services.* By this common worship in church Christian unity is especially preserved and strengthened. In the church, at public worship, the assembled faithful appear as members of one family; all hear the same divine word in the public instructions, all participate in the same divine sacrifice, all adore the same God and Saviour, all partake at the table of the Lord of the same food, all become one with God, and brethren of one another. By a fervent participation in public worship each edifies and encourages the other to piety, thus mutually aiding each other to aspire after heavenly things. This is the most effectual means for preserving and strengthening Christian unity. Happy the congregation which attends church with zeal and devotion, for with them is the true Christian life, and, consequently, Christian unity. On the contrary, unhappy are the congregations whose members, instead of going to church on Sundays and holidays, either remain idly at home, go in search of pleasures, or do servile work as on week-days; in them Christian life is dead, and if there be any unity at all, it is based upon temporal interests and natural inclinations, and is no longer Christian unity.

Make the resolution again to-day never to miss mass on any Sunday or holiday if you be in good health, and not prevented by anything serious. Make those under your charge also assist regularly at the services of the Church and see that they behave devoutly and reverently. It was at the peril of their lives that the primitive Christians in times of persecution assisted at the divine mysteries on Sundays and holidays, and many of them obtained the crown of martyrdom by so doing. May their example be an incentive to you!

III. In mutual love.

The Apostle has this mutual love in view when he says: *Receive one another, as Christ also hath received you unto the honor of God.*

1. Jesus Christ is the great pattern of love, as he is of all the virtues; every page of the gospel gives testimony of his love for men. What love did he not show to the poor whom he fed, to the sick whom he healed, and to the needy whom he invited to come to him: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11 : 28. How he loved the poor, to whom he preached the gospel; the weak whom he strengthened and comforted; the sinner, to whom he showed grace! How sincerely he loved even his bitterest persecutors and enemies, for whom he prayed even in his dying hour! And what truly divine love did he not manifest for all men, for whose redemption he shed his precious blood on the cross! Thus Christ can truly say to us: "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another, as I have loved you."—*John* 13 : 34.

2. Should not the example of our divine Saviour be an encouragement to us to love one another? If you hate, envy, revile, slander, calumniate, or persecute one another, what kind of Christians are you? What kind of Christians should we be if, instead of being solicitous about the welfare of our neighbor and sympathizing with him in all his misfortunes and trials, we were to take advantage of him in his difficulties, refuse to relieve him in his wants, and let the hungry beggar totter from our door?

Consider, then, seriously, what your love for your neighbor has been heretofore. What were your feelings towards him? How did you speak of him? How did you behave in your intercourse with him? If you find you have committed faults against fraternal charity, amend your lives, for without a true love for our neighbor there is, and can be, no true love of God; and without the love of God there is no salvation. At the same time, mutual love is the most necessary bond for the preservation of Christian unity. Where love exists, hearts are united, peace and concord reign; but where love is wanting, self-love, hard-heartedness, aversion, hatred, and enmity hold sway. Why so much discord, hatred, quarrels, and contention in our days? Because true fraternal charity is a rare virtue among men.

PERORATION.

Be careful, then, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.—*Eph.* 4: 3. Keep unity of faith. All the sacred truths

the Catholic Church proposes to our belief must be to you the divine truth, which you must be ready not only to assert and defend on all proper occasions, but to lay down your very life for it if necessary. Fulfil your duty by attending the church services; practice diligently private and family devotions, and never neglect to hear mass on Sundays and holidays. Cherish good will towards one another, and show your love towards your neighbor, according to the example of Christ, in word and deed. If you do this, there will be peace and concord and the blessing of the apostle will descend upon you: "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Ghost."—*Rom.* 15 : 13. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* 11: 2—10. At that time, when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to him: Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another? And Jesus making answer said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me. And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold, they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? a prophet? yea, I tell you and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: Behold, I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WHAT DOES JESUS SAY OF HIMSELF, AND WHAT OF JOHN?

According to the account given in this day's gospel, we find John the Baptist in prison. How came this holy man there? You all know. He had said to the adulterous Herod: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."—*Matt.* 14: 4. The incestu-

ous prince became angry, apprehended John, and cast him into prison. Truth begets hatred, and hatred persecution and injustice of every description. This has always been the case, and is so still. Even when in prison, with death inevitably before him, John was solicitous for the salvation of his disciples; for this reason sending two of them to Jesus, he said to him: "Art thou he that art to come (the promised Messias), or do we look for another?" John himself did not doubt the divinity of Christ, nor his dignity as Messias, but his disciples were not yet assured on this point. He therefore sent them to Jesus, not for his own, but for their sakes, in order that Christ might teach them and strengthen their faith. The contents of the gospel for this day may be divided into two questions, which we shall answer for ourselves:

I. What does Jesus say of himself?
II. What does he say of John?

Part I.

What does Jesus say of himself?

1. *Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen.* We might naturally expect that Christ would have replied directly to the question of the disciples of John: "Art thou he that art to come," and have said: "Yes, I am the Christ, the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world." But he did not answer directly in this form, and for a very good reason. The disciples of John had already heard of the wonders of Jesus; now they witnessed them with their own eyes, because Jesus, in their presence, healed all manner of sicknesses and bodily infirmities. To these miracles Jesus appeals: they should give testimony of his divine dignity and mission.

Our Lord gives us here an important lesson. Many now-a-days say: "We are also Catholics." Do they speak the truth? They do not while their lives are in contradiction to their words. If they were Catholics, they would believe what the Catholic Church teaches, they would respect temporal and spiritual authority. But do they? No; they believe what pleases them, they hold that the Pope is, at least, superfluous, and inimical to nations; they make light of bishops and priests, neglect nearly all the duties of religion, such as the hearing of the word of God, prayer, fasting, and the reception of the sacraments. And yet they call themselves Catholics. The Lord preserve us from such! My brethren, be not deceived. We must prove by works that we are Catholics; empty words have no value before God. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 7: 21.

2. Jesus now enumerates his works, in these words: *The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them.* Isaias had already prophesied: "God himself will come and save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened; and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart; and the tongue of the dumb shall be free."—*Is.* 35: 4—6. Jesus appeals to this prophecy, and thereby proves that he is truly the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world, foretold by the Prophet Isaias. He says, as it were: "I perform the very same wonders which, according to the prophet, God himself, when he should come to redeem man, was to perform; therefore I must be God, and the Redeemer of the world." These miracles in themselves were incontrovertible proofs of the divinity of Jesus; through them God the Father gave testimony that Jesus spoke the truth, when he declared himself to be his Son and the Redeemer of the world. And Jesus, working all miracles in his own name, also proved in a palpable manner that he possessed divine power, and that, consequently, he was God. From this we see:

(*a.*) *The obstinancy of the Jews,* who nothwithstanding these supernatural acts of Jesus, did not believe in him. They certainly had no excuse before God for their unbelief. The same may be said of the unbelievers of our time. Their incredulity proceeds from an evil heart, and is therefore to be condemned. Do not permit yourselves to become through them wavering and staggering in your faith.

(b.) The goodness of Jesus. All the miracles which Jesus wrought were not only proofs of his divinity, but also of his goodness and mercy. He fed the hungry, healed every kind of infirmity, and even raised the dead to life. What benefits! Let us imitate Jesus as much and as nearly as we can, and let us cheerfully perform works of Christian mercy. These works make us conformable to Jesus, and have the promise of live everlasting.

(c.) The magnitude of the grace of our Redemption. If we interpret these miracles in a spiritual sense, the whole human race was *blind,* had lost almost all knowledge of God, and was sunk in the most degrading and abominable idolatry; Jesus enlightened it by his doctrine. Mankind was lame, incapable of rising from the misery of sin and walking in the way of justice; Jesus redeemed it, and acquired for it the grace to do good. It was leprous, full of sins and vices; Christ cleansed it by his precious blood. *It was deaf to the voice of conscience,* and the requirements of the divine law; he caused it to listen again to the word of God. It was dead, deprived of supernatural life and sanctifying

grace, he raised it again to the life of grace. By the power of Christ and the commission he gave it, the Church, which he established, continues to work these miracles.

3. Lastly, Christ says of himself: *The poor have the gospel preached to them: and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me.*

(a.) Why does he say: *The poor have the gospel preached to them?* Did he preach only to the poor? No, he preached also to the rich and great of the world, to the Jewish high-priests, Scribes and Pharisees, and expressly commanded his Apostles to go into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature.—*Mark* 16 : 15. But it was the poor people in the lower walks of life that were most docile to his holy teaching, and clung to him lovingly; wherefore he addressed himself particularly to them and constantly worked amongst them. It has always been so, and is so still. Three hundred years had elapsed before an emperor was converted. The rich and the great have little liking for the Christian religion; it is, forsooth, too stern, too rigorous, too austere for them; to the poor it affords consolation, because it proposes to them eternal salvation as a recompense for their privations and sufferings in this life. Christ, however, had also adherents among the rich and great, such as Joseph of Arimathea, Nathaniel, Gamaliel, and others. Thus there are to-day rich nobles and princes who are counted among the most zealous Catholics. But these rich and noble people are poor in spirit; they do not place their affections upon the goods of this world, but make use of their riches and position for the glory of God and the salvation of their fellow-men. Whether we be rich or poor, we must be poor in spirit, otherwise we shall hear the gospel, not to our salvation, but to our condemnation.

(b.) Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me; that is, "Blessed is he who is not scandalized at my poverty, my humiliation and persecution, my passion and death, my doctrine, which surpasses human reason, my commandments, which are so much in opposition to human passions—but who firmly believes in me, and serves me faithfully." Christ had reason to speak thus, for his poverty and humility, sufferings and death, precepts and doctrines, were to the heathen foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block. They refused to believe him. But neither Jews nor heathen had any cause to be scandalized by Christ or his doctrine; they should have paid attention to the prophecies, to the sanctity of his life, and to his miracles, especially to his resurrection; they should then have recognized him as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world; and his humiliation and lowliness would have caused them to admire his infinite mercy and

goodness, and to love him the more. Alas! there are not a few among us who are scandalized, if not by the person, at least by the doctrine of Jesus—the proud, the avaricious, the envious, the unchaste, and all who hate self-denial and the mortification of the flesh. To them the doctrine of Christ is too austere; therefore they either reject it altogether or interpret it in such a way as to harmonize with their passions and inclinations. What blindness! We shall be judged, not according to the maxims of the world and the flesh, but according to the doctrine of Christ.

PART II.

What does Christ say of John?

When the disciples of John had gone away, Christ began to speak to the multitudes, and to praise the virtues of John. He did this to remove the suspicion that John's belief in him as the Messias had wavered, or that his imprisonment was a deserved punishment from God. Let us also labor to guard our neighbor against the suspicions of others. and defend his honor. Christ's commendations of John were spoken in his absence. How base would it be for us to praise our neighbor to his face, and defame and despise him in his absence. And yet this is frequently done.

1. Let us now hear what Christ says of John: *What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?* In these words Jesus praised the fortitude of John. He served God all his life with equal fidelity, preached the word of God to all without regard to persons, to the rich and the poor, the great and the lowly, with the same openness—was not afraid to say to a king, "It is not lawful for thee," and finally died for justice and truth. What fortitude!

We also must show fortitude in avoiding evil and doing good, and in the performance of the duties of our religion and state of life. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith; do manfully, and be strengthened."—*I. Cor.* 16: 13. But how many of us are weak reeds, that bend to every wind; we make good resolutions, but do not carry them out them; we promise God and the priest in confession never again to commit this sin, to avoid that occasion of sin, *but the promise is not kept?* Is this fortitude? A temptation assails us and allures us to evil; we yield and consent? Is this fortitude? We act from human respect and fear, from temporal motives, against our better convictions, and transgress the commandments of God. Is this fortitude? This inconstancy, this weakness, displeases God very much, and draws down severe punishment, as we see exemplified in the Israelites. Let us amend.

2. *But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold, they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings.* Jesus here praises the mortified life of John. John was an angel in human flesh; and yet he lived as the most rigorous penitent. His place of habitation from his childhood was the desert, his clothing consisted of coarse material, of camels' hair, with a leathern girdle around his waist; his food was locusts and wild honey, and his cry was: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand." How admirable is this austerity in a man who never committed a sin! And we, who from childhood's days to this hour have so often and so grievously offended God, shun every mortification, deny ourselves nothing, and complain of every inconvenience! Do you call this doing penance? In the time of Christ effeminacy and pride in dress could not yet have been very prevalent because he says: "They that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings." Now-a-days it is otherwise. You need not go to the courts of kings to find people that are effeminately and richly dressed; in the city and in the country, even in the huts of the poor, they are found. Indeed, nearly all classes dress beyond their means and rank in life; the poorest maid-servant dresses like the daughters of the wealthy, and many a simple woman appears in an attire which would be elegant enough for a lady of the most ample fortune.

Why all this extravagance in dress? Certainly, it is not for the purpose of pleasing God. When it oversteps the proper limits of our means and condition in life it is at best but a vain and silly display. Nor, alas, does it stop even here in many cases. How many dress to attract attention, to entice, to tempt. Are their thoughts only as a child's thoughts, while parading themselves and their finery for such purposes? To how many sins does not this rage for fine clothes lead? Take to heart the words of St. Gregory: "The love of luxury and fine clothes is sinful; for if it were not culpable our Lord would not have mentioned it as a cause of the damnation of the rich man, saying: 'The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, and after his death he was buried in hell.'" Think of the shroud you will one day wear, and avoid effeminacy and pride in dress.

3. *But what went you out to see? a prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written? Behold, I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.* Jesus praises in these words the dignity of the person and office of John. John was more than a prophet, since, unlike the prophets of the Old Law, who only in spirit saw and foretold Christ, he pointed directly to him as present, immediately prepared the way for him, and baptized him. The greatness of the

Baptist appears also from this, that the prophets of old foretold John's coming and announced him as the forerunner of the Lord. —*Malach.* 3 : 1. John is called an angel, not an angel by nature, but because he walked undefiled and holy, as an angel, and especially because, like an angel, he was sent to minister to those who should receive the inheritance of salvation.—*Heb.* 1 : 14.

You should be as John was, like the angels. Strive for purity of morals; shun every mortal sin more than death; do not commit even a venial sin thoughtlessly, much less with premeditation. Be ye also angels to your fellow-men, especially to your children and domestics, leading them by word and example to virtue and the fear of God.

PERORATION.

Take to heart the lessons which the gospel of this day inculcates, and observe them. Like our Saviour, let your works give testimony that you are in truth what you ought to be, good Christians. The work reflects credit upon the workman. Take John for an example, and with diligence and zeal practice those virtues which Jesus praises in him, his fortitude, his austerity, and his zeal for souls, that with him you also may deserve the praise of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

CHRIST PREFIGURED AS THE REDEEMER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another?—Matt. 11 : 3.

We need not ask: "Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another;" we know with certainty that Jesus Christ, and no other, is our Lord and Redeemer. Suppose a king were to announce to his subjects that after a certain time he would send his son to them, furnishing them in the meantime with his son's portrait; they would certainly know him when he did come, and would say: "Yes, this is the king's son, for the portrait which his father sent is true to life."

Now, the heavenly Father, before he sent his divine Son as Redeemer of the world, gave us a portrait by which to recognize him, representing his person in every feature, beyond the skill of the painter's brush to delineate. This portrait of Christ we have in his types. We find in the Old Testament many persons and things that refer to the Redeemer and represent him in his life and actions. Of these types and figures I shall speak to you to-day:

I. The personal,
II. The real types.

PART I.

Personal types of Christ: Adam, Abel, Melchisedech, Abraham and Isaac.

1. In *Adam*, the first man, we find a type of Christ. Adam is a progenitor of the human race according to the flesh; Jesus according to the spirit; for he has aroused us from the sleep of sin and eternal death to a life of grace. While Adam slept, God took a rib from his side and out of it formed Eve, to be his companion, and the mother of a great posterity. When Christ slept on the cross the sleep of death, the Church came forth from his sacred side, and by the conversion of Jews and Gentiles brought forth countless multitudes of children. Adam by his disobedience brought ruin and perdition upon all men; Christ, on the contrary, by his obedience brought grace and salvation to all mankind. Thus Adam is a type of Christ; wherefore St. Paul calls Adam "a figure of him that was to come" (*Rom.* 5: 14), and Jesus "the second man."—*I. Cor.* 15: 47.

2. Another figure of Christ is *Abel.* He was a shepherd; Jesus is the Good Shepherd.—*John* 10: 11. Abel offered a sacrifice, with which God was pleased, whilst he rejected Cain's offering; Jesus also offered a sacrifice, *i. e.*, himself. God was pleased with this sacrifice and rejected those of the Old Law.—*Malach.* 1: 10, 11. Abel was innocent; out of hatred and envy Cain, his brother, slew him. Jesus was also innocent; the Jews, his brothers, according to the flesh, out of hatred and envy delivered him to death. God cursed Cain; he was made a fugitive and vagabond upon the earth. God set a mark upon Cain, that no one should kill him. The curse of God also visited the Jews, those murderers of Jesus; as fugitives they wander over the earth since their execrable deicide. They cannot be extirpated until the end of the world, because God desires that they should live.

3. Another figure is *Melchisedech.* The word "Melchisedech" signifies *king of justice,* and *Salem,* the place of which he was king, means *peace.* His father and mother, his beginning and end are unknown; he was not only a king but also a priest, and he offered bread and wine. In all these relations Christ is prefigured. Jesus is the King of Justice, because he brought justice into the world; he is the Prince of Peace, because he established peace between God and man. According to his divinity he is without beginning and without end; he is the High-Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech, offering himself daily to his heavenly Father, in the sacrifice of the mass, under the appearances of bread and wine.—*Hebr.* 6. 20, and 7: 1—3.

4. Another figure of Christ is *Abraham.* At the command of God he left his own country, and went into Chanaan; he was ready in obedience to God to sacrifice his only son, Isaac; he prayed for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha; his descendants were multiplied as the stars of heaven, and because of his obedience a blessing came upon all the nations of the earth. Jesus also left heaven, his own country, to come upon earth to fulfil the will of his Father. He was obedient even to the death of the cross, he is also a mediator with his heavenly Father for us poor sinners; and on account of his obedience all the nations of the earth are blessed, and numberless are his descendants, the faithful Christians.

5. Lastly, a figure of Christ is *Isaac,* Abraham's son. He ascended Mount Moria, there to be sacrificed; he carried upon his own shoulders the wood on which he was to be slaughtered; arrived on the mountain, he allowed himself to be laid upon the altar without offering any resistance. So also Jesus, without a murmur of dissent, ascended Mount Calvary, carrying on his own shoulders the cross on which he was to die. He permitted himself to be led unresisting to the slaughter.

Here we have a few holy men in whom Christ is prefigured. All the remarkable persons in the Old Law bore some resemblance to Jesus Christ, and if we put those things together in which they resembled him, we shall have a perfect image of Christ. As the saints of the Old Law were types and figures of Christ, so should we be; we should strive to impress, feature by feature, his image on our hearts. Our salvation depends on this: "For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son."—*Rom.* 8: 29. Make frequently a comparison between Jesus Christ and yourselves, and ask: Do I resemble Christ in sentiments? Have I no inordinate love for temporal things? Do I detest what is bad? Do I always seek first the kingdom of God and his justice? Do I

resemble Jesus in my life? Am I free from every sin, at least from every mortal sin? Do I lead a mortified life? Do I carry with patience the cross which God puts upon me? You call yourselves Christians, that is, followers and imitators of Christ; show by your lives that you are Christians, and strive to become daily more conformable to him.

Part II.

Jesus was prefigured in the Old Law, not only by persons, but also by things. Of these latter I shall mention only three: the *Paschal Lamb*, the *Manna*, and the *Brazen Serpent*.

1. Shortly before their departure from Egypt, God told the Israelites, through Moses, that every head of a family was to take a lamb without blemish from his flock, and prepare it for a meal. The lamb was to be roasted and eaten by them, but so that no bone was broken, and with the blood of the lamb they were to sprinkle their door-posts, for the angel of the Lord would go around by night and kill every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, but he would spare them on account of the blood on their doors. This judgment of God was executed. Whilst every first-born of the Egyptians died in one night, all the children of Israel were saved. As a memorial of this favor, the Jews every year celebrated the feast of the Paschal Lamb in the same manner as their forefathers in Egypt on this memorable occasion. *Exod.* 12.

This *Paschal Lamb* is a very distinct figure of Christ. It was to be without blemish; Jesus also is free from every stain. No bone of the Paschal lamb was to be broken; the legs of the crucified Saviour were not broken, as were the legs of those crucified with him. The blood of the lamb, which was put upon the door-posts, was the cause why the Angel of death spared the Israelites; we owe it to the precious blood of Jesus that we are freed from eternal death. The Apostle refers to the Pashal lamb when he exhorts us: "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ our Pasch is sacrificed."—*I. Cor.* 5:7.

2. The *Manna* which during forty years God rained daily from heaven in the desert for the Israelites is also a figure of Christ, as he says himself: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it, he may not die."—*John* 6:48-50. The mysterious bread of which Jesus here speaks is the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, which serves for our food and nutriment on our journey through the desert of

this life, preserving us from the death of sin and procuring for us life everlasting.

3. A striking figure of Christ is the *brazen serpent.* In punishment of their sins, God sent serpents among the Israelites in the desert, from whose bites many died. As they quickly repented of their sins and prayed for mercy, God commanded Moses to make a brazen serpent, and to set it upon a post, that those who had been bitten might look upon it and be healed. Moses lifted up the brazen serpent on an elevated place, and all who looked upon it with faith and confidence were cured.

Christ says that this brazen serpent prefigured himself. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have live everlasting."—*John* 3: 14, 15. Men had been mortally bitten by the infernal serpent; Christ was lifted up on the cross, and whosoever looks upon him with a believing and contrite heart will be healed of the wounds of his soul and be saved from eternal death. The brazen serpent had the form of a venomous serpent, and yet it healed the poisonous bites; Christ hung on the cross in the form of sinful flesh, yet he healed our wounds, which sin had inflicted.

Besides these types and figures, I could mention many more, say, the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea; the water issuing from the rock; the ark, and the sacrifices. Jesus Christ is the end of all the ordinances and institutions of the Old Law; everything finds its last end and fulfilment in him and his Church.

PERORATION.

This figurative character of the Old Law indicates that its whole purpose was to prepare the world to receive and acknowledge Christ as the promised Messias. And not only was every act of his life foreshadowed in those types and figures scattered through Jewish history, as well as in the Mosaic ordinances, but we also discover therein types plainly referring to the chief dogmas of his holy religion. This figurative character of the Old Law is equally conclusive as to the greater personal graces given to Christians in the New Law, as compared with those dispensed of old to the chosen people. All that the Jewish Church could offer to her children was merely a shadow and a figure, which had value and significance only in so far as it referred to the promised Redeemer. How much more favored are we Catholics! We have the holy sacrifice of the mass, which not only reminds us of the sacrifice of the cross, but also applies to us its merits and graces; we have the sacraments, by which we are really freed from sin, and are sanctified; we see Jesus, our Saviour,

no longer in figures, but we possess him in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, really and substantially present, and are permitted to unite ourselves with him most intimately in holy communion. Let us show ourselves grateful for these great graces, and let us avail ourselves of them during this holy season of Advent, for our reconciliation with God and for our eternal salvation. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ADVENT.

The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them.—*Matt.* 11: 5.

When the sun rises, the dawn fades away and disappears. St. John the Baptist, who had fulfilled his vocation as forerunner of our Lord, disappeared when the Sun of Justice rose in the noonday splendor of his public life. He worked the greatest miracles to convince the Jews of his divine mission; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again. John retires from the scene of his labor, is languishing in prison, and ere long will end his wonderful career as a martyr. Thus, after four thousand years, Jesus Christ, the expectation of nations, has arrived. The time of Advent, which we celebrate, reminds us of this great and wonderful mystery of the love and mercy of God. The four thousand years which elapsed from the creation of man to the birth of Christ may be considered as one long Advent, or preparation for the coming of the Messias; the four weeks devoted by Holy Church to the preparation for the Christmas festival is our Advent. These two Advents and their significance I shall endeavor to explain by answering the two following questions:

I. What is the Advent before Christ?
II. What is the Advent after Christ?

PART I.

The Advent before Christ represents to us,

1. The *great misery* into which mankind was plunged because of sin.

2. The *mercy of God*, who had compassion on sinful man and promised him a Redeemer.

3. The *longing of mankind* for the promised Redeemer.

1. Our first parents had sinned. Terrible were the consequences of their sin both for themselves and their posterity; the loss of grace, of original justice and innocence, of the right and title to the kingdom of heaven; whilst ignorance, concupiscence and tribulations of every kind were rife. "As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."—*Rom.* 5: 12. And the worst of it was that man could not by any effort of his own free himself from sin and its consequences. Left to himself, nothing remained for him but to live and die in sin. How enormous the evil which sin brought upon the whole human race!

Original sin unfortunately was the mother of numberless other sins, and the result was that the corruption of morals increased from day to day. As early as the time of Noe man had become so wicked that God repented of having created him, and decreed to destroy him from the face of the earth.—*Gen.* 6: 6, 7. The corruption became still greater after the deluge; mankind lost all knowledge of the true God and was sunk in the depths of idolatry. "They were," as the Apostle says, "filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, covetousness, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity, whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy."—*Rom.* 1. 29-31. This was the state of the ancient world. With the exception of the Jewish people, who preserved the knowledge and the worship of the true God, all the nations around were plunged in idolatry and lay buried in the mire of viciousness and moral turpitude.

2. Who could remedy this? God alone. And he did remedy it. As a good father sacrifices everything to lead an erring son back to the right path, so God in his infinite mercy and goodness made use of every means to save sinful man. He chose for himself a nation in which the true faith and the hope of the coming Redeemer

should always be preserved, namely, the Israelites. To guard them against evil ways, he gave them an all-embracing law, a divine worship, rich in ceremonies; he instituted a priesthood which preached to them the law and offered sacrifices for them, and from time to time he sent them prophets to exhort them to do penance. As often as they sinned the judgments of God fell upon them, and were not removed till they were converted.

Nor were the Gentiles entirely abandoned by God. He spoke to them by the voice of conscience.—*Rom.* 2: 14-16. He sent them pious men and prophets and gave them opportunities to know him, especially through his chosen people, with whom in various ways they came in contact, as during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. The promise of a Redeemer was one of the principal means which God made use of to draw the people to himself. He had promised a Redeemer to our first parents.—*Gen.* 3: 15. He repeated this promise to Abraham (*Gen.* 12: 2, 3); to Isaac and Jacob (*Gen.* 22: 18); and to all the children of Israel by the prophets. Hence the belief in the coming Redeemer was propagated not only among the Jews, but also among the Gentiles.

3. Think of a poor, forsaken, sick man, who, suffering great pain, lies day and night on his couch; will he not sigh for relief? And if he hear of a physician who can help him, will he not long for him, and so much the more the longer he delays to come? This was the condition of the people in the Old Law; they knew and felt their misery, and were sure that a Redeemer would come. What was more natural than that they should long for him? The prophet only lends words to this longing desire when he exclaims: "Drop down dews, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour."—*Is.* 45: 8. The whole religion of the Jews nourished this longing for the Redeemer. When they celebrated their feasts, they thought of the Messias, whom these same feasts foreshadowed; when they went up into the temple, they said to themselves: When will the Messias come to glorify this temple by his presence? When they offered sacrifices, they turned their mind to the contemplation of the Messias, who would offer himself for the expiation of their sins.

We meet with this longing for the promised Redeemer also among the Gentiles. The sages from the East furnish a proof of this. How quickly they set out on their journey when they saw the miraculous star! They regarded no inconvenience on their long journey, no expense, no dangers; their only solicitude was to see the new-born king of the Jews; and when they had found him, they were full of veneration, gratitude, and love; they fell

on their knees and offered the most precious things they had—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This was the Advent before Christ, a space of four thousand years of misery, yet mitigated by the mercies of God, who promised a Redeemer to man and prepared him for his coming; a time of the most fervent longing of the sinful human race for the promised Redeemer. Think of this sad Advent; give thanks to God that he has sent you a Redeemer, and make good use of the grace of Redemption.

PART II.

The Christian Advent is that time of about four weeks which the Church has appointed for the worthy preparation for Christmas. This preparation consists chiefly,

1. *In belief in Jesus,*
2. *In the love of him.*

1. Belief in Jesus is the first requisite for salvation, for without faith we have no communion with Christ, and therefore cannot become partakers of the fruit of Redemption. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."—*John* 3: 14, 15. As no one could be healed of the bite of the poisonous serpents, unless he looked with confidence upon the brazen serpent, so no one who does not believe in Christ crucified can obtain the life of grace and eternal salvation. Therefore the Church in the decress of the Council of Trent (6 *Sess.* c. 7) calls faith the beginning of salvation, and the foundation and root of all justification, and declares that without it no one has ever been justified.

(*a.*) Give thanks to God with a grateful heart during this holy season of Advent for having called you from your infancy to the holy Catholic Church, which alone is in possession of the true faith, and renew your promise to preserve this faith till your last breath as the most precious gift of heaven. As there are so many unbelievers and free-thinkers in our days, who revile, calumniate, and strive to bring contempt on the Church, her institutions, and her priests, be on your guard not to be seduced by them. Avoid all intimate intercourse with them and do not soil your hands with their papers and writings.

(*b.*) Be zealous for your holy faith, and strive, as much as possible, to preserve and strengthen it in others. If you know that one or other of your neighbors keeps a newspaper hostile to the Church, instruct him with regard to the sin he commits and the

danger to which he exposes his own salvation and that of those belonging to his household. If you meet with men who attack and reject the truths of our holy faith, tell them that they are the truths taught by the Catholic Church, which Christ himself established, which he glorified by numberles miracles, and for which millions of the most enlightened and pious men have sacrificed their life's blood. You, fathers and mothers of families, do all you can so that your children and those under your charge may not be seduced to unbelief by their intercourse with men without faith, or by reading their irreligious writings.

(*c.*) Pray for the conversion of unbelievers and heretics, that God may enlighten them and bring them into the pale of the Church.

2. In order to become partakers of the fruit of Redemption, we must not only believe in Jesus, but we must also love him. Without love faith profiteth nothing. "If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."—*I. Cor.* 13: 2. "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema."—*I. Cor.* 16: 22. "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith, that worketh by charity."—*Gal.* 5: 6.

(*a.*) This love of Jesus requires above all things that we keep our souls from *mortal sin.* Mortal sin is a total separation from God, a rebellion against him, a new crucifixion of Christ; how could love exist with it? What, then, must all those do during Advent who are in a state of mortal sin, in order to prepare themselves for Christmas? They must make a good confession, for confession in the means for the remision of sins and for the recovery of divine grace and love. Oh! that all who have hitherto lived in sin would during this holy season reconcile themselves to God by a good confession.

(*b.*) Love requires, moreover, that we extirpate *all inordinate inclinations.* When the Philistines set the ark of God by their god Dagon, he fell down and broke into pieces. "Behold Dagon, lay upon his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord." —*I. Kings* 5: 3. *etc.* Jesus is a jealous God, he permits no idols; we must give him our whole heart. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." We must therefore suffer no inordinate inclinations in our heart. Examine yourselves and see whether you have any inordinate inclination for a certain person, for money, for honors and dignities, or for anything else. If you have, extirpate it, that Christ with his grace may come into your heart.

(*c.*) Lastly, love requires that we have a desire for Jesus and aspire to union with him. If we love a person sincerely, we wish to see him and to converse with him, and we deem ourselves happy to meet him. We shall have the same wishes and sentiments if we love Jesus with our whole heart. Pray therefore very fervently during Advent, since prayer is the easiest means of uniting yourselves with Jesus. Visit as often as you can the Blessed Sacrament, for there he is really and truly present, and you give him the greatest joy if you visit him devoutly. And I exhort you, in particular, to receive Jesus in holy communion, for by it you will unite yourselves with him most intimately and become partakers of his divine nature.

PERORATION.

You now know the significance of that long and gloomy Advent of four thousand years before Christ, as also the meaning and object of our own brief Advent. As the people in the Old Law were obliged to prepare themselves for the Advent of the promised Redeemer by belief in him that was to come, in order to participate in the fruit of Redemption, so we must prepare ourselves during Advent for the feast of Christmas, that Jesus may come into our hearts and communicate his graces to us. This he will do, if we believe in him and love him above all things. Show then that you are good Catholics, who firmly believe all that the Church teaches, and who are prepared to sacrifice everything, rather than become disloyal to the Catholic Faith. Do all you can to help others to gain this inestimable treasure of the faith, and to preserve it in them. Let your faith become active by charity, for it is charity that gives value to faith and leads to salvation. Show your love for Jesus by cleansing your heart from sin and all inordinate inclinations, and by a zealous exercise of prayer and devotion. This is the true preparation for Christmas that will bring you grace and salvation. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

HOW WE ARE TO PREPARE FOR OUR REDEEMER A DWELLING IN OUR HEART.

Behold, I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.—Matt. 41: 10.

In the Fourth Book of Kings, we read of a pious, charitable woman of Sunam who, after the prophet Eliseus had several times on his journeys put up at her house, said to her husband: "I perceive that this is a holy man of God, who often passeth by us. Let us therefore make him a little chamber, and put a little bed in it for him, and a table, and a stool and a candlestick, that when he cometh to us he may abide there." *IV. Kings* 4: 8. *etc.* She did as she had said, and the prophet henceforth stopped regularly at her house and requited the hospitality shown him by obtaining of God a son for her and by raising him to life after he had died of sunstroke.

Two weeks hence we shall again solemnize the holy feast of Christmas. A greater and nobler guest than Eliseus, our divine Saviour himself, will visit us and enrich us with his graces. Let us follow the example of the Sunamitess so that Jesus maycome and abide with us. The chamber that we must give him is our heart, for he himself says: "My son, give me thy heart." But in order to prepare our heart for his dwelling, we must, like the Sunamitess, place therein:

I. A stool,
II. A table,
III. A candlestick,
IV. A bed.

Part I.

A stool.

In every sitting-room there must be chairs for people to sit upon. We must also have a chair in our heart for Jesus to rest on. And what is this chair? *Interior recollection, peace of heart.* What did Jesus do when he was called to raise the dead daughter of Jairus to life? He turned out the minstrels and the crowd making a

rout, and then went to where the dead girl lay and recalled her to life.—*Matt.* 9: 23-25. Those who live in constant dissipation can never be interiorly recollected, nor turn their thoughts to God and to the affair of their salvation: such persons need not hope that Jesus will visit them and abide with them, for there is no chair in their heart for him to sit upon. Our image cannot be reflected upon a sheet of water agitated by winds and storms, but only upon a clear, calm surface; in like manner Jesus visits only those hearts that are pure and peaceful. For this reason souls that truly love God have always endeavored to be interiorly recollected. Many Christians, solicitous for their eternal salvation, left the world entirely and retired into solitudes, that they might be more recollected and tranquil. Turbo, a great officer of state, resolved, at an advanced age, to spend the remainder of his life exclusively in the contemplation of divine things. Hence he lived in retirement for seven years. When his end approached he composed his own epitaph. Did it read thus? Here lies Turbo, who for more than fifty years gloriously conducted the affairs of the empire. No. It read: *Here lies Turbo, who indeed reached an old age, but lived only seven years.* Behold, this man considered that he had lived only those years which were spent in interior recollection and in solicitude for his salvation. And he was right.

2. If you were to life seventy or eighty years, but always full of worldly cares and not solicitous about your eternal destiny, they would be years lost, for Jesus dwelt not in your heart. How necessary therefore that in your solicitude for the temporal you forget not what is eternal. Count not the years of your life, but the years of your conversion. Be often recollected, especially in the morning before you go to your daily occupation, and in the evening, when the day's work is done. On these occasions call to mind the last good resolutions you have made. During your work frequently raise your heart and thoughts to God; ask his protection and blessing, and promise him a return of love. Devote some time, on Sundays and holidays especially, to this interior recollection: reflect on the necessity of saving your soul and make good resolutions to attend with greater zeal and fervor to this one thing necessary. This is the chair which you must place for Jesus in your heart.

PART II.

A table.

1. You must also place in your heart a table, at which Jesus may sit and dine. But what shall we put on the table? Oh, that

food which he calls his favorite dish, as he himself says: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work." —*John* 4: 34. The fulfilment of the will of God, or obedience to God, his heavenly Father, is his favorite food. This was his food all the days of his life upon earth. To do the will of his Father he became man; he lived in poverty, lowliness, contempt and persecution; he taught, and he worked miracles; he suffered and died on the cross. To do the will of his Father he was subject to Mary, his Mother, to Joseph, his foster-father, to the Jewish law, even to the Roman Emperor and to Pilate, the governor.

2. The fulfilment of the will of God, therefore, is the table which we must place in our hearts and never remove. Jesus demands this, for he bids us say every day: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." When therefore you know a thing to be the will of God, do it, and be not deterred from doing it by any obstacle or difficulty. If it be hard to give up familiarity with a certain person, to restore ill-gotten goods, to forgive those who offend you, to abandon a bad habit, say to yourself: "It is the will of God that I do this, and do it I will." If it be difficult for you to be patient at your work, to bear afflictions and sickness with resignation, to overcome all temptations, say again to yourself: "It is the will of God that I do this, and I will do it." If it come hard to you to practice the virtues of humility, meekness, chastity, and obedience, say to yourself again: "It is the will of God that I practice these virtues, and I will practice them." With this spirit all the saints were animated. The will of God was their first and only thought, the soul of all their actions. St. Ambrose says: "The soldier does not settle the route of his march himself; he does not go where he wishes to go himself; he does not put himself where he would like to be put; God forbid; but he receives orders from his general and executes them punctually. In like manner, we must go the way and occupy the post which God has appointed for us; we must willingly submit to his commandments and teachings; in other words, we must faithfully and punctually do his will. That Jesus may come into our hearts, let us not omit to put a table there for him; that is, let us in all things do the will of God.

Part III.

A candlestick.

As in every room for guests there is a candlestick, so must there be one in our heart if we would attract the divine guest Jesus. Within him in whose heart a candlestick is missing there is

darkness; and Jesus dwells not in darkness; he is the light of the world. What kind of a candlestick is it that we require?

1. *The word of God*, of which David says: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths."—*Ps.* 118: 105. Without this light there is darkness in the heart. What darkness prevails to this very day among the pagans to whom the word of God has not yet been preached! They have scarcely any knowledge of God, but are plunged in the most degrading idolatry. Even among Christians who neglect to hear the word of God, and do not read religious books, there is great darkness in matters of religion. They have scarcely the most necessary knowledge of the Christian doctrine, wherefore they are in danger of losing the faith. In many cases they act contrary to their duties as Christians, and transgress the commandments of God and of his Church without any scruple, because they are so ignorant in religious matters. How necessary it is, therefore, that you put a candlestick in your heart, if you wish Jesus to visit you and to abide with you. Listen attentively to the word of God, which is preached to you on Sundays and holidays, often read a spiritual book in which the truths of our holy religion are explained, love to converse on spiritual subjects, in order to acquire the necessary knowledge of religion, and see that your children attend Sunday-school.

2. *The examination of conscience.* What the woman in the gospel did, who lighted a candle and searched in every corner for the groat she had lost, we ought to do daily. We should diligently search every nook and corner of our conscience and the innermost recesses of the heart, in order to find out what is wrong and faulty, and then amend it. He that does not examine his conscience carefully and diligently, will never arrive at a knowledge of himself, and consequently will never thorougly amend his life; for faults that are not known are not amended. Hence the saints and spiritual writers attach the greatest importance to the examination of conscience. St. Augustine says "Put yourself in spirit before the tribunal, place yourself as the accused before yourself, hold rigorous judgment over yourself, that the judgment of the Lord may be milder and more gracious." Even the heathen philosopher Pythagores advised his pupils to ask themselves twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, these three questions: *What have I done? How have I done it? Have I done everything which I should have done?* Never omit before you go to bed to make a short examination of conscience. Ask yourselves: What have I thought, spoken, and done? Of what faults have I been guilty? What good, which I should have done, have I neglected? How have I performed my daily tasks, my exercises

of devotion, and other good works? With zeal and fervor? With patience? With a good intention? Have I kept the particular resolution, which I made in the morning? Repent of the faults you have committed during the day, ask pardon of God, and promise amendment.

Part IV.

A bed.

In a room set apart for a guest, who is to a remain with us over night, there must a bed. Without a bed the most beautiful apartment would not be a guest's room, and no one would wish to spend a night in it. We must also prepare a bed for Jesus in our heart, that he may come and dwell there. But what must we do to prepare such a bed for him? We must—

1. Every evening, before we go to rest, say our *night prayers.* Horses, when the harness is removed and they are fed, lie down to sleep. These poor animals have no understanding, no knowledge of God; hence they experience no necessity to look up to their Creator and Preserver, no obligation to give him thanks before they go to rest. Christians must not act in like manner. We know whence we are, and why we are on earth, we know our Maker and Master, and are taught that to him we owe all that we are and have. We also know that every day we live is a pure gift of God, and that every night we need his protection against the dangers that menace both body and soul. How wrongly therefore do those Christians act who go to rest at night without recollecting themselves and settling their account with God? Is not this acting the part of a brute? Do not imitate such conduct; on the contrary, say at least a short prayer, give thanks to God for his benefits during the day, ask pardon for your sins, and recommend yourself to the protection of God, of Mary and of the angels and saints.

2. *Behave in bed during the night piously and modestly.* The bed, I must say, is a terrible place; for sleep, to which we there consign ourselves, is a brother of death, because it vividly reminds us of death, and not unfrequently passes into death. How many have gone to bed and begun the night in sleep, but ended it in death! Therefore it is almost certain that we shall, and perhaps soon, die in the bed in which we sleep every night. With this thought present to the mind, who would not behave modestly in bed? who would defy God and commit sin, perhaps very abominable sin? No, you should, if anywhere at all, be pious in bed, and so comport yourself therein, that on your death-bed you may

not have to reproach yourself. Sprinkle yourself with holy water before going to bed; make the sign of the cross and kiss the medal you wear; occupy yourself in bed till you fall asleep with pious thoughts and short ejaculatory prayers. If you awake during the night and find it impossible to sleep for some time, turn to wholesome meditation and exercises of devotion; pray particularly for the poor souls in purgatory, who also find no rest, that God may give them eternal rest.

PERORATION.

Now you know how you are to prepare your heart for the abode of Jesus. Do what the pious Sunamitess did in preparing a room in her house for the prophet. You are better off than that woman, for the preparation which you have to make in your heart does not cost anything. You need only *a good will.* Put a *chair* there, that is, cultivate interior recollection. Do not forget the *table*; aim at nothing so much as to do the will of God in all things. Put a *candlestick* there; love to listen to the word of God, read spiritual books, and examine your conscience every evening. Put up a *good bed*; never neglect your night prayers, and behave yourself always piously and modestly in bed. Behold, this is the true preparation of our heart, and if it be thus prepared, our dear Saviour will come and make his abode with us, and will one day receive us into the mansions of bliss. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

RULES OF CONDUCT IN REGARD TO HUMAN PRAISE.

And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John.—Matt. 11 : 7.

What our Lord did, according to the gospel of this day, occurs frequently, nay, daily, in human life; as he praised his forerunner, St. John, so we praise others, and others perhaps praise us. But frequently that is done which Jesus did not, namely, many mistakes are made by violating humility, prudence, modesty, or truth. We praise others and allow ourselves to be praised—frequently

without cause; we deceive ourselves and others, burdening our conscience with many sins. This is sufficient reason for us to consider the example of Christ, in order to learn from him how to act in bestowing or receiving praise. I shall therefore speak to-day on the rules of conduct in regard to human praise, and explain to you what we must observe

I. When we praise others,
II. When others praise us.

Part I.

1. *When we praise others, the praise must be deserved.* The example of Christ teaches us this. The eulogistic things which he said of John were not groundless flatteries, but were based upon truth, and therefore merited praise. John was not wavering as a reed, but strong; he was not effeminate, as people in the palaces of kings, but led an austere, mortified life; he was more than a prophet, because he pointed out the Saviour as already present, and prepared the hearts of the people for his kingdom. He, therefore, whom we praise must be really praiseworthy, and must possess the good qualities which we laud in him. Unmerited praise is, to a sensible, upright man, an offense, rather than praise. For instance, if you praise a man for his learning, tact in business, corporal beauty, or for any other quality which he either has not at all, or only in a slight degree, what must he think of you? He must consider you either a fool, a flatterer, or a clown who wishes to ridicule him, and he will turn from you in contempt. If he be vain and foolish enough to accept your false praise as good coin, you pluck out his eyes, as it were; you blind him, make him proud; and this is sinful.

(*a.*) But it is a still greater mistake to praise in another qualities and actions which deserve no praise. And yet how frequently this is done! Miserable flatterers and corrupt, immoral men know how to give a beautiful color to the basest actions, and to represent them as honorable. Thus they call inordinate ambition, a commendable desire of esteem; avarice, prudent economy; impurity, natural amiability and friendship; unbelief and free-thinking, progress and enlightenment; hatred and persecution of the Church, zeal for human liberty. In like manner, they praise their comrades for their dexterity in fighting, their facility in making money, their superiority in drinking, and their artifices in seducing innocence. To praise in such a manner is to harden others in evil, and to deliver their souls to the devil. Woe to those who praise thus! They will have to render a terrible account, and the punishment threatened to seducers and to those who give scandal

awaits them. Do not extend praise to any one who does not deserve it, and be it far from you to praise what is bad.

2. *When we praise others, we must not do it at the expense of their fellow-men.*

(*a.*) The example of Jesus teaches us this also. He praised John, and even said of him that he was more than a prophet, but in this praise he did not disparage the honor of others; he did not say that Isaias, Jeremias, and the other prophets were not to be esteemed as prophets; he called his forerunner greater than they, because he had the happiness of seeing him, the Christ, and of even baptizing him.

(*b.*) If you praise any one, it must *not be done at the expense of his fellow-men.* In praising a man you must not do so in such a manner as to disparage others. If you have reason to praise James, do so, but let Philip alone. The meanest liar and calumniator is the man who calumniates by insinuation. Such a one will praise James; not that he cares for James, but because by so doing he can injure James' neighbor. Tell me, would it be reasonable and right for a painter to paint your house very beautifully, and your neighbor's very badly, and then tell you that it was not necessary for him to do so in order to show the contrast? And yet many do this very thing when they praise others. Such persons, will say, for instance, of a dealer who is in open and fair competition with perhaps only one other: Ah, I know he is honest, that his word may be relied on; he selects his goods carefully and keeps only the best, and does not take sly advantage of his customers. They will praise to exaggeration the skill of some physician. If the names of two girls come up, they will studiously avoid whispering a syllable about one, while the other will be loudly praised for her modesty, affability, and good sense. Praises thus bestowed are as contemptible in the eyes of decent people as they are sinful in the sight of God. Those who so praise care little for the golden rule: "As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner."—*Luke* 6: 31.

3. *If we praise others, it must be done with precaution and prudence.*

(*a.*) Herein we should also imitate the example of Jesus. He did not praise John in his presence, nor in the presence of his disciples, but only after they had gone away. Why did he do this? To avoid the suspicion of flattering his forerunner, and giving

an occasion of vanity to the disciples of John, on account of their great master.

(*b.*) Generally speaking, you should praise no one to his face. Humble, modest, and sensible Christians dislike nothing so much as to be compelled to listen to their own praise. You sting them, as it were, with needles. But if you praise people who are inclined to vanity and ambition, which is the case with most people, you lay snares for their salvation and lead them to pride, to overrating themselves, and to the contempt of others. It requires a good stomach to digest mushrooms, and more than ordinary humility is required to bear human praise without danger. We must consider this well, and, as a rule, praise no one to his face.

(*c.*) I say, as a rule, for sometimes it is permissible, even commendable and useful to praise others in their presence. Thus, parents may and should praise their children, and superiors their subjects, for their good conduct, to encourage them to be good and fulfil their duties in future. But this must be done very cautiously, and not immoderately, nor for every trifle, lest they overestimate themselves and become vain. Particular precaution is necessary in praising children. The praise that is given them must always be moderate, and of such a nature as to keep them from vanity and self-conceit.

Part II.

1. *We should not be indifferent to the praise of men.*

(*a.*) Jesus was not indifferent to it. We know that when his enemies reviled him as a blasphemer, as a man who had a devil, he rejected these imputations and defended himself. We also know that he received the praises which the people offered him, and reprehended those who blamed him for so doing. Thus he reprimanded the Scribes and Pharisees, who complained that the children cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David," and said to them: "Have you never read: Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings, thou hast perfected praise?"—*Matt.* 21: 16. True, Christ did not seek human praise for himself, but only for the honor of his heavenly Father: "I seek not my own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth."—*John* 8: 50.

(*b.*) We do no wrong when we require others to speak well of us. He who would be entirely indifferent to praise and blame, would show a proud disposition. Such indifference can and must only exist when there is a question of fulfilling our duties of

religion and our station of life, and of doing the will of God. As the willof God is above everything else, we must not allow ourselves to be deterred from fulfilling it when we are reviled, calumniated, or persecuted by others. In all other cases it is right for us to require that men think and speak well of us.

2. *We must not, however, inordinately crave for human praise.*

(*a.*) Human praise is often of short duration, for those who to-day laud our name to the skies may to-morrow blame us and drag us into contempt. We see this exemplified in Jesus. The Jews on Palm Sunday saluted him as the Messias, and cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and five days after, on Good Friday, the same people cried out furiously: "Away with him, crucify him, crucify him."—*John* 19: 15. Human favor and praise are as changeable as the weather; why then desire it inordinately?

(*b.*) Human praise is of value only when it is merited, that is, when God is satisfied with us, and we may expect praise from him. What did it profit Herod that his flatterers praised and deified him, when, on account of his vices, he was an object of disgust in the eyes of God and was rejected by him for ever? And what will all the world's praises and prizes, the world's adulation and homage, profit a few years hence the great men of our day—men, who in their might and their pride trample under foot all laws, human and divine? Nothing, yea, less than nothing. All power is from God, and of that very power, now placed in their hands and so fearfully abused for the gratification of their passions, even of that, too, shall they render an account. God will judge and condemn them. What does it profit you if people think and speak well of you, and every one praises you, when your conscience tells you that God hates and despises you? Be ashamed of yourself and humble yourself before God and man, when you receive praise which you do not deserve.

(*c.*) Human praise is very dangerous for us if we desire it vehemently. We rob God of the honor which is due to him alone, we lose all the merits which we ought to gain by our good works, and we expose ourselves, for the sake of men, to the danger of incurring God's displeasure by acting against the duties of religion and our state of life. Let us desire human praise only so far as it is subservient to the honor of God and to a faithful pursuit of our avocation. Let us frequently pray with David: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to thy name give glory."—*Ps.* 113: 9.

We must not, when men praise us, yield to vain imaginations and become proud.

(*a.*) If we are what people take us to be, and if we deserve the praise they give us, we have, nevertheless, no reason to allow vain thoughts to arise within us. And why? Because we owe all the good that we have and do, not to ourselves, but to God: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"—*I. Cor.* 4: 7. We all must confess with the same Apostle: "By the grace of God I am what I am."—*I. Cor.* 15: 10. A beggar borrows garments of silk and gold, puts them on, and is proud of the praise which he receives in his splendid attire. How foolish! We are equally foolish if we inordinately value human praise, and nourish proud thoughts in our heart. If we have anything praiseworthy, let us give God the honor, from whom every good gift comes.

(*b.*) Moreover, we can never say that we really deserve praise, for even if we possess the good qualities for which we are praised, we are, or at least have been, contaminated with various faults and sins, which are far from being praiseworthy. If any one praise us we must think: If you only knew that I have been, and still am, a sinner, inclined to every evil, you would certainly not praise me. As often as we are praised, let us think of the sins of our past life, for then we shall disregard the praise and the applause of the world, and preserve the virtue of humility, which is so necessary.

PERORATION.

Remember the rules which I have laid down for your observance in regard to human praise. Praise him only who really deserves it; do not, whilst you praise one, disparage another; be prudent in your praises, that you may not harm your neighbor more than you benefit him. Be not indifferent to human praise and blame, and while living in such a manner as to deserve praise do not desire it inordinately, much less permit vanity and pride to reign in your heart. Your principal desire should be to deserve praise in the sight of God, and to hear one day the words of Jesus: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of the Lord."—*Matt.* 25: 21. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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7. MORAL SKETCH.

IMPENITENCE.

The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again.—Matt. 11: 5.

Happy the times to which it was given to see the Saviour of the world? Happy the blind, lame, and deaf, who had the grace to be healed by him! Oh, that we could say of all the spiritually blind, lame, and deaf of our day, that they had been healed by Christ! Who are they who are spiritually blind, lame, and deaf? Sinners in general, but especially those whose hearts are hardened in wickedness, and who live in obduracy. There are many sermons preached during the year, at times on deep, earnest and terrifying truths, then on more consoling ones; the speaker entreats, instructs, promises, and threatens, he places heaven and hell before people's eyes; but the spiritually blind will not open their eyes, the lame will move neither hand nor foot, the deaf will not give ear to the inviting grace. How long will they persevere in their obduracy? Alas, it is to be feared, till their end, till their damnation. This is the subject on which I intend to address you to-day. I shall preach on impenitence, and show—

I. How terrible and dangerous it is,
II. By what marks it is known.

PART I.

Not only are those impenitent who knowingly persevere in sin, but also all those who live in sin without thinking of penance and amendment of life. Such are all habitual sinners. And under this head must be classed persons who are passively sinning, say, those who do not restore ill-gotten goods, who do not repair the injury done to a neighbor in person, property, or reputation, who keep up enmities, who do not break off dangerous intimacies nor forego familiarities with persons of the opposite sex. All these are living in an impenitence which is terrible even to think of, as I shall show *by passages and examples from the Sacred Scriptures.*

1. *Passages from the Sacred Scriptures.*

(*a.*) "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sin, contemneth; but ignominy and reproach follow him."—*Prov.* 18: 3. He that heaps sin upon sin, despising graces and admonitions to repentance, hardening his heart in malice, becomes incurably sick and his end is ignominy and eternal damnation. "I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and perpetual shame, which shall never be forgotten."—*Jer.* 23: 40. What a terrible threat and to how many sinners does it not apply? "All the men that have tempted me now ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall not see the land for which I swore to their fathers." —*Num.* 14: 22, 23. As God has appointed for every man his allotted years of life, so he has decreed the number of sins which he will forgive him, and when that measure is full he will forgive no more, but will depart from the sinner, whose fate is then sealed. Eusebius of Caesarea says: "God waits for a certain number of sins, and then he abandons the sinner." The danger of impenitence increases with every new sin, for it is to be feared that each sin is the one which fills up the number and measure of his crimes, after which perdition follows. Oh, that every unfortunate sinner would say to himself: If I sin again, the measure of my sins may be filled, and I shall be lost for ever. But does not God give to every one, as long as he lives, the grace to be saved? Yes; he always gives him ordinary and sufficient, but not extraordinary graces. The ordinary graces of themselves would be sufficient for penance and conversion. But the deeply-fallen and impenitent sinner does not make use of the ever-present, sufficient grace, and consequently it will never become efficacious whilst God, on account of his continued impenitence, abandons him; he perseveres in sin, and is lost.

(*b.*) "We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed: let us forsake her, and let us go every man to his own land."—*Jer.* 51: 9. God treats the sinner as a physician does his patient. First, he uses mild means, ordinary graces, interior inspirations and gentle admonitions, promising him pardon and heaven. If these means produce no effect, he resorts to severer measures; he rouses his concience, which reproaches him bitterly; he sends him as it were another Nathan, who upbraids him for his sins; he leads him to a confessor, who, with earnest representations refuses him absolution; he visits him with sufferings and afflictions. Woe to him, if even these powerful medicines do not heal his sick soul! When the physician sees that the sick man's life can not be saved, he no longer prescribes or forbids anything, but allows him to eat and drink what he pleases, and to do as he pleases. God, the divine Physician of our soul, does the same. He

leaves the impenitent person to himself; his conscience becomes silent, his faith disappears, his fear of God decreases, he is cheerful even in his life of sin, but he sleeps on the brink of an awful precipice. What a terrible state! Unless Jesus perform a greater miracle than when he raised Lazarus to life, who had been already four days in the grave, such an impenitent sinner will surely be a child of perdition.

(2.) *Examples from the Sacred Scriptures:*

(*a.*) *Pharaoh in Egypt.—Exodus* 7. This king sees the most palpable acts of divine omnipotence; he sees the rood of Moses changed into a serpent, water into blood, a terrible hailstorm devastating the fields, grasshoppers and others insects devouring every green thing, a dense darkness covering the earth, all the first-born males dying in one night; he confesses publicly that these are wonders and judgments of God, and yet he falls back into his old obstinacy. At last the measure of his sin is full, he finds his death with his whole army in the depth of the Red Sea. A father of the Church exclaims: "What obstinacy and obduracy! God changes water into blood, but he can not change the heart of this impious king!"

(*b.*) *Joram, son of Josaphat, King of Judea.* This wicked prince ordered his six brothers and other nobles of his kingdom to be slain, fell into idolatry, persuaded his people the worship idols, and committed many other crimes. In his wonderful mercy God still sought to save him. He commanded the prophet Elias, whom he had already taken up from the earth in a fiery chariot, to write a letter to the king and exhort him earnestly to do penance. Elias wrote the letter and sent it to the king. In this letter the prophet upbraided him for his crimes and announced to him that, unless he be converted, God would visit him, his family, and his people with great plagues, and chastise him with a sickness so terrible that his entrails would fall out. One would think that this letter, with such terrible threats, composed by a saint, who was no longer among mortals, would have made a salutary impression upon him, and would have brought him to penance. But no, he remained impenitent to his last hour. The threatened punishments came upon him, but he was not converted; he died, as he had lived, in sin. In this obstinate sinner we see how truly Jesus speaks when he says that the sinner who will not hear Moses and the Prophets, that is, the priests and pastors of souls, would not be converted, but would remain impenitent, if one arose again from the dead and preached penance to him.—*Luke* 16: 31.

(*c.*) *Judas, the traitor.* This man, an Apostle, one of the twelve, who had accompanied his Lord during the whole course of his ministry, who had witnessed all his wonderful works, who had been acquainted with all the mysteries of God, who had partaken even of the Sacrament of the New Law, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and had received power to consecrate the same in the sacrifice of the mass, persevered in his wicked course, remained a servant of mammon, and to gratify his avarice, betrayed and sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver! Jesus gave him to understand that he knew what he was about to do, and told him that it were better for him if he had never been born. He washed the feet of Judas, he allowed himself to be kissed by him, and called him his friend, but all this did not soften the hard heart of the traitor. The unhappy man remained perverse to the end, finally despaired, and hanged himself! So dangerous, so terrible, is the state of obdurate sinners. God wishes to save them by his graces and benefits, by threats and punishments; but they themselves do not wish to be saved. They persevere in their impenitence. And what will be their end? Abandonment by God, eternal damnation. Are there, perhaps, some among us who are in this dangerous and terrible state of obduracy? Let us answer this question by ascertaining the marks of impenitence.

PART II.

A man's obduracy in sin is apparent, either by his making light of the ordinary means of grace provided by God for his conversion and sanctification, or by his making a perverse use of those means. That each one may be the better able to look closely into his own heart, I shall briefly pass a few of these means in review. If we be neither making light of any of them, nor neglecting them, nor abusing them, it is well with us. If, on the contrary, we discover that we have been holding any or all of them in slight account, or still worse, abusing them, our eternal salvation is in peril. Of these means I shall now mention only five:

1. *The word of God,*
2. *The holy sacraments,*
3. *Inspirations of grace,*
4. *Meditation on the four last things,*
5. *Prayer.*

1. *The word of God.* There is and can be no doubt that the word of God is one of the chief means of grace, since, as history proves, numberless sinners have been converted by it. The Ninivites, to whom Jonas preached the word of God, did penance in sackcloth and ashes.—*Jon.* 3. Numberless pagans were converted to the

Christian faith by the preaching of the Apostles and their successors. St. Jerome says: "The preaching of the word of God is a plough which looses the soil of the soul, roots up the thorns of vices, and softens the hardness of the heart." But with many sinners the word of God remains without a salutary effect. They are enemies of the word of God, they never go to hear a sermon, but mock those Christians who frequent the church for that purpose. Instead of hearing the word of God on Sunday, they sit idling at home, or go to saloons and drink, or only come to church when the sermon is over. Others hear a sermon now and then, but without the least intention of practicing what they hear. Now, I ask, do not such Christians bear on their foreheads a visible mark of impenitence? Can you expect a sinner who is not benefited at all by the word of God, this most effectual means of grace, to have nevertheless the desire to be reconciled with God by true penance? Certainly not; therefore Christ says of them that they are not of God, because they do not hear the word of God.—*John* 8: 47.

2. *The holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.* These, without doubt, are the most important and effectual means of grace, for whosoever receives them worthily is purified and sanctified. He who makes a good confession, no matter how great a sinner he may be, is justified, becomes a child of God and an heir of heaven. What a grace! In holy communion Jesus himself comes to us, and imparts his graces to us, whereby we are enabled even in this world to lead a heavenly life. On a little reflection one is apt to ask with wonder how it is that a Christian can neglect these sacraments. They are his spiritual strength, his life, the foundation of his hopes. Yet it must be said that these very means of grace, confession and communion bring only perdition to many. And why? Because they either do not receive these sacraments at all or receive them unworthily. Some allow the whole year to pass, even Easter-time, without confession and communion. Others and their number is still greater receive the holy sacraments at times, but unworthily, because they do not comply with the conditions which are necessary for a worthy reception of them. And, unhappily, some go on doing this for many years without a scruple. If once in a while their conscience force them to listen to its warning, the fear excited is only momentary. They turn from the unwelcome thought and shrink from the difficulties of a true and thorough repentance. And do I say too much if I call such Christians impenitent? Surely, that man is on the direct road to an impenitent death-bed, who obstinately shuts his ears to all divine invitations, to God's threats as well as promises, and persistently refuses to make use

of the most necessary means of salvation, or, what is even still worse abuses those means to the greater outrage of the Almighty.

3. *Interior inspirations and impulses to do good.* God works upon man interiorly and invisibly to save him from perdition. If he be about to sin, he warns him, places before his eyes the wickedness of his designs, and threatens him with his displeasure and punishment; after the sin, and as long as he lives in sin, God arouses in him feelings of remorse from time to time, excites in him anguish and fear, and reminds him of the terrible fate that awaits him. These interior graces are for every sinner a powerful impulse to do penance; nay, it is certain that without them a conversion is never effected. Now, if a sinner despise all these interior inspirations and impulses to repentance, and continue his sinful life from year to year, without ever thinking of a return from his evil ways, is not this a manifest sign of impenitence?

4. *Meditation on the four last things.* How effectual a means to keep our souls from sin is meditation on the four last things, as the Holy Ghost tells us in these words: "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."—*Ecclus.* 7: 40. How could a Christian who has faith continue to sin, if he seriously reflect that everything does not end with death; that death may come at any moment, that judgment follows, in which we must give an account of every idle word; if he reflect that there is a hell, in which the impenitent sinner will suffer unspeakable and eternal torments, and a heaven with inexpressible and everlasting joys, but from which sin excludes him? St. John Climachus relates that there lived in the monastery on Mount Horeb a brother, who, after a lukewarm and irregular life, became sick and fell into a stupor. He recovered, however, lived twelve years longer in a very secluded way, practicing great austerities. After this he fell sick again; the brothers came to his death-bed and asked him to give them some wholesome advice before his departure. He spoke only these few words. "Pardon me, brothers; no one who thinks of death and judgment, hell and heaven, will ever be able to sin." Now, if some sinners do not remember their last end, but banish the thought of if from their minds, and do not like to hear sermons on death, judgment, and hell, what must we think of them? What can we think but that they are hardened in wickedness, and are of the number of the impenitent?

5. *Prayer.* This is the most *necessary means for conversion.* Not a single sinner has ever been converted without prayer. Prayer is the most *effectual means for conversion*, for by prayer the sinner obtains graces, frequently very extraordinary ones. As long as a sinner prays, there is hope that he will be converted. But if he

gives up prayer entirely, or prays only with reluctances and without devotion, his condition is a deplorable one, and unless God works a miracle, he will die, as he lives, in impenitence.

PERORATION.

I have now shown you how terrible and dangerous is the state of impenitence or obduracy in sin, and have given you the marks by which it is known. Oh, that there were none in this parish who could be numbered among the impenitent, none having the signs of impenitence! The spiritual condition of such sinners is indeed a fearful thing to contemplate. And only to think that there may be some such among us! Prove yourselves. He who has heretofore lived in sin, let him renounce it in this holy season of Advent, with the full determination to be converted to God with all his heart. Oh, that what Christ says in the gospel of this day might be effected in a spiritual manner in the case of all sinners: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead rise again." Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

EPISTLE. *Phil.* 4: 4-7. Brethren: Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh. Be nothing solicitous; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE PICTURE OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

Who art thou?—John 1: 19.

The question which the Jewish priests and Levites put to John: "Who art thou?" is for us all of the greatest importance; for on the answer depends nothing more or less than our eternal

salvation. If we can each say in truth: I am a good Christian, I believe all that the Catholic Church teaches, and all that she commands, then we have a well grounded hope of eternal life; but if we must confess that we are anything but good Christians, we have reason to fear that eternal damnation will be our inheritance. In order not to deceive ourselves in answering this question, let us turn our attention to the lesson of this Sunday; for in it the Apostle draws a beautiful picture of the true Christian, the outlines of which are:

I. Continual joy in the Lord,
II. Gentleness towards all men,
III. Filial confidence in God,
IV. Preservation of the peace of God.

Part I.

Continual joy in the Lord.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice." In these words, the Apostle exhorts us,

1. *To rejoice,*
2. *To rejoice in the Lord,*
3. *To rejoice in the Lord always.*

2. *Rejoice in the Lord.* This is strange. The wordly-minded man finds nothing joyful in Christianity; to be a Christian, and, therefore, to live according to the principles and precepts of the gospel, he thinks has nothing but sadness in its train and banishes all joy from the heart. But this is an error as great as to say that a light does not illuminate, but causes darkness; that a fire does not cause heat, but cold. Christianity produces true joy. Oh, how much reason have not we Christians to rejoice? What does faith teach us? It teaches us that God is charity, that he is infinitely merciful, and that his Providence does all things well; that Christ is our Redeemer, and that unspeakable felicity is awaiting us in heaven. If we were not Christians, we should know little or nothing of all these truths. How miserable and unhappy should we feel? Christianity furnishes us with the necessary means for our reconciliation with God, for our purification, sanctification, and justification. If we were not Christians, we should have no mass, no sanctifying grace, no peace of heart, for we should have no sacraments, and consequently we could not obtain the forgiveness of our sins. Would not our lot be most wretched? should we not be driven almost to despair? Certainly; the Apostle is therefore right when he exclaims to us: "Rejoice!" for only the Christian religion, by its doctrines and means of salvation, makes it possible

for us to rejoice in a world which is truly called a valley of tears.

2. *Rejoice in the Lord.* The Apostle does not invite to sensual joys, as banquets, plays, dances, and similar amusements; for although a Christian is allowed to enjoy such pleasures moderately, they are not to be highly prized, because they are passing and fleeting, and, if they last long, cause fatigue and disgust; besides, they are apt to be abused. Much less does he speak of sinful joys; for these are unworthy of a man and a Christian; they leave a sting in the conscience, and make man unhappy for time and eternity. Oh, that no Christian would drink out of the chalice of sinful joys! for he drinks only deadly poison. The Apostle exhorts us to *rejoice in the Lord.* Wherein does this joy consist? In the consciousness that we are united with Jesus by his grace and love. He who can say to himself: I am in the state of grace, Jesus loves me, and I love him, he is my Saviour and my All, and my exceeding great reward in heaven; such a person rejoices in the Lord, a joy in comparison to which all worldly joys are a mere nothing. Witnesses for this are the saints. St. Jerome says: "The Lord is my witness that in the intoxication of bliss it frequently appears to me as if I were in the midst of the choirs of angels." St. Bernard says: "I am a great deal more joyful now than I was in the world." St. John Berchmans was always so cheerful that he was called the merry saint. He used to say that he did not know what melancholy was. Have always a good conscience, and you will have joy in the Lord, which even here below will render you happier than all earthly enjoyments ever could.

2. *Rejoice in the Lord always.* How is it possible to rejoice always, since our life upon earth is a warfare so full of bitternes? Do we not meet with numberless crosses and afflictions? Is there not much misery in the world? Have we not continually to struggle against the enemies of our salvation? Do we not always live in uncertainty as to whether God has forgiven us, or whether we shall persevere unto the end and obtain the palm of victory? This is all very true, but a good Christian has, nevertheless, continual joy. He rejoices in tribulations and afflictions, for faith tells him: "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II. Cor.* 4: 17. He rejoices, though his conscience tells him that he has sinned; for, although he has no certainty that he has obtained forgiveness, hope sustains him, because he knows that God does not reject a repentant sinner. He rejoices in all struggles and in all the uncertainty of salvation, for he knows he has the necessary means, of which he has only

to make use, in order to overcome all temptations and persevere in the grace of God. What a difference between a worldling and a true Christian! The joys of the former are fleeting, few, and always bring restlessness, remorse of conscience, and misery of every kind in their train: the joys of the latter are lasting in all the changes and circumstances of life, for they have their foundation in religion, that inexhaustible fountain of joy and consolation, nay, in God himself, the Eternal and Unchangeable. If you desire to rejoice always strive to be always good Christians.

Part II.

Gentleness towards all men.

Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh.

1. The word "modesty" signifies here gentleness, goodness, mildness of temper, kindness in your conversation with others; in a word *gentleness towards our neighbor.* A Christian must be gentle and kind towards all men, patient with the erring, forbearing with the faulty, indulgent with the weak, compassionate and merciful toward the poor, forgiving towards those who offend him, meek towards the irascible; in a word, he must have Christian, fraternal love, of which St. Paul says: Charity is patient, is kind, charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."—*I. Cor.* 13: 4-7. This gentleness or love is the second outline in the picture of a true Christian.

Do you find this outline in yourself? Have you compassion on the poor and do you assist them as much as lies in your power? Do you bear in your heart no aversion towards those who offend you, and do you forgive injuries and offenses against you? Do you envy no one, do you wish well to everybody? Are you kind and friendly to your domestics and acquaintances? Think seriously and earnestly on these and similar questions. Remember that those who are lacking in gentleness towards their fellow-men are not true Christians, are not conformable to Jesus, and therefore, unless they be truly and thoroughly converted, cannot be saved.

2. *The Lord is nigh.* These words can be understood in a double sense: as referring to the omnipresence of God, or to the nearness of the judgment that awaits us. In the former as well

as in the latter sense, they ought to be to us a motive of gentleness towards all men. The Lord is nigh; he sees that which we do or omit, he hears our words, he penetrates into the depths of our heart. If we are ashamed to do in the presence of man what is evil, how dare we sin before the eyes of God? How can we be uncharitable to our neighbor, how can we treat him harshly and hard-heartedly, when we know that charity is God's principal commandment, and that he is charity itself? *The Lord is nigh.* He, as it were, stands as judge before our door; we shall soon die and appear before his tribunal, and we are taught by the infallible word of God that a judgment without mercy shall be passed upon him who shows no mercy.—*James* 2: 13; *Matt.* 25: 24. Parable of the unmerciful servant.—*Matt.* 18: 28, *etc.* Should not the thought of the last judgment be sufficient to deter us from all uncharitableness towards our neighbor, and induce us to be kind and gentle?

PART III.

Filial confidence in God.

1. *Be nothing solicitous, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God.* St. Paul cautions us against unnecessary care and anxiety, and exhorts us to put our confidence in God. The Christian is to work and attend to his business with care and circumspection, he is to make use of lawful means to guard himself against damage and loss, and to make an honest living. But that is sufficient; he need not trouble himself further; he may safely leave the rest to God. Herein the Christian is distinguished from the worldling. For while the Christian, after doing what in him lies, casts all his care upon the Lord, the worldling is full of unrest and anxiety: he thinks and acts as if there were no God, or as if we could not rely upon him, or as if everything depended on himself and not on God. This is not acting like a Christian, but like a heathen. And there are many who call themselves Christians who have these heathenish sentiments. Your maxim must be: Do all that you can, and then calmly and confidently beg God's help for what you are unable to accomplish; do your part, and God will do his.

2. If we have trouble, if we be visited by sufferings and afflictions, let us, according to the admonition of St. Paul, turn to God by prayer and supplication. Prayer is the means to avert all evil, to obtain all good. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—*Ps.* 49: 15. "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall

receive."—*Matt.* 21: 22. Numberless examples in Holy Scripture and in the history of all times corroborate the truth of these divine utterances. Let us, therefore, prove ourselves true Christians, and in all our necessities have recourse to God in prayer.

3. Why does the Apostle say that we should make known our petitions to God, with thanksgiving? The expression sounds strange at first. People are generally supposed to be thankful after their petitions have been acceded to. But the Apostle exhorts us to be thankful beforehand; even in making our petitions, to do so giving thanks. And the reason of the advice is not far to seek. For, first, even if we be in suffering and affliction from which we petition to be delivered, we must not cease on that account to be grateful to God for all that he has done for us in the past. Many, when the hand of affliction is upon them, forget what good things they have received at God's hands and still enjoy; they forget former gifts and benefits; they no longer have words of thanks for God, but only of complaint. This is not just, it is not Christian. We must remember the former graces and good gifts of God, even in the time of tribulation, and give due thanks to him for them. Secondly, because even sufferings and afflictions are themselves graces, for which we owe thanks to God. If God place a cross upon our shoulders, it is only for our good. He wishes to draw us to himself, to guard us against sin, and give us opportunities for repentance and for the increase of our merit. Should we not return thanks to him for these blessings? Thirdly, because thanksgiving in suffering and affliction makes us hope that our prayer will most certainly be heard. When God sees that we willingly accept from his hands not only prosperity but also adversity, and that we return thanks to him for the one as well as for the other, he is especially pleased with us, and inclined to hear our prayers. The true Christian, therefore, gives thanks to God for everything, saying with Job: "If we have received good things at the hands of God, why should we not receive evil?"—*Job* 2: 10.

Part IV.

Preservation of peace with God.

1. *And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* Man has no peace so long as he lives in sin, for thus saith the Lord: "There is no peace to the wicked." How could the unhappy sinner enjoy peace, since he is the adversary and enemy of God? His conscience gives him no peace. The peace of God is the inheritance of true Christians,

who either walk in innocence, or who by a worthy penance are reconciled with God. "Much peace have they who love the law." —*Ps.* 118: 165.

2. *The peace of God surpasseth all understanding.* Peace is so great a good, so full of bliss and sweetness, that he who has it not can never conceive any adequate idea thereof. The endeavor to explain it in words to such a one were fruitless. Those who possess it, those who have enjoyed its blessedness, know it as a foretaste of heaven. Can anything be imagined sweeter and more consoling than to be able to say: I am a child of God, God loves me, and I have the good and firm hope of being with him for ever in heaven? How did you feel after your general confession? Did you not say: A heavy load is taken from my heart, I would not exchange the joy I feel for all the pleasures of the world? Behold, this is the peace of God. Happy the Christian who possesses this peace. O sinful soul! if you would but burst the bonds of sin and attain the liberty of the children of God, that you also might know this peace of God!

3. *The peace of God keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus;* that is, the happiness which this peace gives keeps our hearts and minds from all contamination, and in union with Christ. Christians who have the peace of God close their hearts to the world, to sin and temptations: they find pleasure only in God, and love him above all things; they also carefully guard their eyes, ears, hands, and tongue against every evil, and make use of them only for the service of God, for the fulfilment of their duties, and the welfare of their fellow-men. Oh, that this peace might be with us all; this blessed peace which preserves our interior and exterior from all sin and in the most intimate communion with God.

PERORATION.

Let every one of us ask himself the question: "Who art thou?" St. Paul in the lesson for this day has drawn the picture of a true Christian; let us study it in all its outlines, and compare ourselves with it, that we may know whether we are true Christians. If we are not, how long shall we wait, how many graces and opportunities shall we suffer to pass without profiting by them? The longer we live for the world, the longer we abide in sin, the fainter grows the hope of our ever becoming true Christians. Now is the time; perhaps after another year, perhaps to-morrow, it will be too late. The holy season of Advent draws to its close; let us not delay to purify and renew ourselves, that we may become what, with the grace of God, we can and will become, true Christians. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

Gospel. *John* 1. 19-28. At that time, the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to John, to ask him: Who art thou? And he confessed, and did not deny: and he confessed: I am not the Christ. And they asked him: What then? Art thou Elias? And he said: I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered: No. The said therefore unto him: Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? what sayest thou of thyself? He said: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias. And they that were sent, were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said to him: Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? John answered them, saying: I baptize with water; but there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not. The same is he that shall come after me, who is preferred before me: the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose. These things were done in Bethania beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WHAT DOES ST. JOHN SAY OF HIMSELF, OF HIS BAPTISM, AND OF CHRIST?

At the time when John commenced to preach and to baptize, the belief was general among the Jewish people that the promised Messias had either already made his appearance, or that his advent was nigh. The belief was based especially on the prophecies of the patriarch Jacob (*Gen.* 49: 10), and of the prophet Daniel (9: 23-27), both of whom foretold the time when the Redeemer should appear. John was highly estemed by the Jews; the miracles before and after his birth, his life in the desert, the extraordinary austerity of his penance, his eloquent sermons, and his baptism of penance, led many to suppose that he was Christ, the Redeemer of the world. Therefore the Sanhedrim, or high council, at Jerusalem, sent a solemn embassy of priests and Levites to him, to request that he would give them his own statement as to who he was and the object of his mission. The high council, it is true, had anything but a good purpose in so doing; ambitious and proud as its members were, they could not endure that John should stand in such high honor and esteem with the people. The embassy therefore had actually in view only to

bring John into discredit and to alienate the affections of the people from him. That the entire contents of this gospel may become plain to us, I shall answer the two following questions:

I. What does John say of himself?
II. What does he say of his baptism, and of Christ?

PART I.

1. *Who art thou?* This was the first question that the embassy asked him. They did not ask him directly: "Art thou Christ?" but their question had this meaning. And he confessed, and did not deny; and he confessed: I am not the Christ." Hereby John confessed without any restriction that it would be a great error to suppose him to be Christ, for he was not.

(*a.*) We must frequently, especially in the holy season of Advent, ask ourselves this question: "Who art thou?" I am a human being, having an immortal soul and a mortal body. For which do I care the more? Perhaps for the body. Oh, how foolish, since this body will soon sink into the grave and moulder away! I am a Catholic. Do I adhere to the Church with filial love? Do I believe as a Catholic? Do I live as a Catholic? Do I side with the enemies of the Church? Do I read newspapers and books hostile to the Church? Are you the father of a family, a mother, a child, or a servant? Ask ourselves: Do I fulfil the duties of my state of life? I am a sinner. If I die in my sins what will become of me? I must, I will do penance, and make a good confession during this holy season of Advent.

(*b.*) John says briefly and emphatically: "I am not the Christ." Let us admire this love of truth, and admiring, imitate. Let us never offend against truth from vanity, to appear more than we really are, or from self-interest, to gain an advantage or to avert some danger, nor in jest, to amuse ourselves and others; for a lie is always a lie, always sinful and base, especially because it establishes an affinity between us and the devil, who is the father of lies. "A lie is a foul blot in a man."—*Ecclus.* 20: 26. Parents, teach your children the baseness and sinfulness of lying, and punish them severely as often as you find them violating the truth.

2. *And they asked him: What then? Art thou Elias? And he said: I am not. Art thou the Prophet? And he answered: No.*

(*a.*) How could the deputation ask John whether he was Elias when this prophet nine hundred years before had been taken up from earth to heaven in a fiery chariot? The Jews did not understand the prophecy of Malachias: "Behold, I will send you

Elias the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," (4: 5); they looked for the reappearance of Elias at the first coming of Christ, whereas it will take place only at his second coming, that is, at the general judgment. John might have given an affirmative answer to the question: "Art thou Elias?" without violating the truth, for although he was not Elias in person, he was in spirit; he lived as austerely and labored as zealousy; wherefore Christ calls him Elias. In like manner he declared that he was not the prophet, that prophet whom Moses had promised to the Jews.—*Deut.* 18: 5. This prophet, foretold by Moses, was Christ himself; but the Jews understood by this prophet an ordinary one, perhaps the prophet Jeremias, who, according to their belief, was to appear, together with Elias, at the time of the coming of the Messias, to prepare the way of the Lord. John had much less reason to answer negatively the question: "Art thou the prophet?" because Jesus placed him above the prophets, and said: "He is more than a prophet."

(*b.*) We have also a beautiful example of humility in John. He desires, first, not to be considered more than he really is, for he says: "I am not the Christ." Secondly, he does not wish to be considered what he is not, for he says: "I am not the prophet." Examine yourself and see whether you have these three degrees of humility. We must not desire to be more, nor give ourselves the appearance of being more, than we really are; this is the first and lowest degree of humility. "Ah, how many of us have not even this degree! For is not our boasting, and especially our love of fine clothes beyond our means and station of life, evidence enough that we desire to appear more than we really are? Do not the hypocrites and the sanctimonious wish to be thought better than they are in reality? And much smaller is the number of Christians who wish not to appear what they really are; that is, who conceal their good qualities and virtues and whatever may be praiseworthy in them. It is only too certain that most people rejoice when their good works are made known to others, and they are praised for them; nay, they sound their own praises when an opportunity presents itself. And lastly, where will you find those Christians who wish to appear less than they are, and who receive and bear humiliations, slights, neglect, and contempt with patience, much less with joy? Is not ill-humor aroused in our heart at the least insult offered to our self-conceit? do we not complain of it as a great wrong? Oh, let us amend, let us become truly humble, as John was, that we may be worthy to enter with him into the kingdom of heaven.

3. When John had given a negative answer to all the questions of the embassy they pressed him to answer in the affirmative.

They said: "Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?" He answered with a passage from the prophet Isaias, which reads: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord."—*Is.* 40: 3. He meant to say: "I am this voice of one crying in the wilderness. God has sent me to announce the coming of the Messias, and to exhort you to prepare yourselves by a total change of life and worthy fruits of penance for his arrival. I am the forerunner of the Lord, and am commissioned by God to preach penance." From this we may learn two important truths.

(*a.*) If we be called upon by our spiritual or temporal superiors to give testimony of ourselves or of others, it is our duty to speak the truth. Every mental reservation, every untruth, every variation from the whole truth, is so much the more sinful, as the authorities may thereby be led to pronounce an unjust sentence, the evil consequences of which we should have to answer for. If we should be required to confirm our evidence with an oath and should nevertheless knowingly tell an untruth, we should commit the horrible crime of perjury. If you be obliged to give testimony before lawful authorities, be conscientious, consider neither advantage nor disadvantage, be not governed by human considerations, but speak the truth as before God.

(*b.*) John declares that, as the forerunner of the Lord, he was commissioned to preach penance. The Church continues this preaching of penance at all times; for penance, as a virtue, is necessary for the just and the unjust, and, as a Sacrament, for all sinners, in order to share in the grace of Redemption. You should, especially during Advent, prepare yourselves by true penance for the approaching feast of Christmas; therefore daily make an act of contrition for the sins of your past life, and perform some penitential works; watch over your interior, and bridle your inordinate inclinations, but especially make, and make it to-day, a resolution to avoid some fault of which you have heretofore been frequently guilty, for instance, cursing, swearing, blasphemy, slander, etc.

PART II.

What does John say of his baptism and of Christ?

1. Those sent to John were, as the Evangelist significantly remarks, Pharisees. The Pharisees were a sect full of conceit, setting up the most extravagant pretensions to justice and holiness. They assumed authority to explain the law, put their own fanciful interpretations on its different passages, and for their interpretations they stickled with an obstinacy commen-

surate with their pride. Thus it came that the law of Moses was practically set aside, and in its stead was propounded an agglomeration of human ordinances. They therefore asked him: *Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet?* Baptism was not unknown among the Jews; they baptized the heathens who became Jews, although the Jews themselves were not baptized. It was, however, a common belief that the right to baptize the Jews also was reserved to the future Messias, and to the prophets immediately preceding him. When John had declared that he was neither Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet, the ambassadors thought that by baptizing he had assumed a right which did not belong to him. Hence their question: "Why, then, dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet?" John justifies himself in these words: "I baptize with water," that is, every one can baptize as I do, for it is only a ceremony, a figurative action which signifies that the heart is to be cleansed from every stain of sin, as the body is cleansed by water. And now he avails himself of the opportunity of speaking of the baptism of Christ: "He that shall come after me shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and with fire" (*Matt.* 3: 11); in other words: "Whereas my baptism is only an empty sign, and signifies, but does not effect, the cleansing from sin, the baptism of Christ is with the Holy Ghost, and has the power, like fire, to cleanse the soul from sin, to sanctify and inflame her with divine love." We had the happiness of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism a few hours after our birth. That was our spiritual regeneration; we were freed from original sin, sanctified, justified, and made children of God and heirs of heaven. What a grace! Let us frequently think of this grace, return thanks to God for it, and renew our baptismal vows, especially on the days we receive holy communion. Parents, show your children frequently their baptismal garment and candle, explain to them what graces they received at their baptism, and exhort them to guard their baptismal innocence as the apple of their eye.

2. *There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not.* John could say this in truth. Christ had already appeared and commenced his public life. The Jews had the long-expected Messias in their midst, but knew him not. This would have been pardonable were it not that afterwards, when he taught and worked miracles and gave them daily the example of a most holy life, they would not know him; this was their sin, for which they could offer no excuse. "There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not." Does not this reproach apply to us also, as well as to the Pharisees? He stands now in the midst of you by his doctrine, his commandments, his example,

nay, he is himself present with you in the Most Holy Sacrament. And how many Christians are there who know him not? How many who do not believe what he teaches by the mouth of his Church, who do not obey his commands, and neither adore nor receive him in the Most Holy Sacrament! Alas, Jesus Christ, although in our midst, has now-a-days become a stranger to states and nations, where his name is mentioned no more, where his Gospel no longer forms the basis of legislation, and where paganism and infidelity become more and more prevalent. Christ has become a stranger in the family life, from which the Christian spirit has departed, and made place for the spirit of the times. Christ has become a stranger in the hearts of many Christians, who allow themselves to be ruled by their passions, and whose thoughts and desires are occupied with the things of this world. Hence the great curse of our time, the general unrest and dissatisfaction, the sea of vices and crimes, which with the resistless force of a flood have inundated the land. And there will certainly be no change, times will be no better, till men again know him who stands in the midst of them, till they again, in the spirit of faith and charity, subject themselves to Christ and to his Church.

3. *The same is he that shall come after me, who is preferred before me; the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose.* In these words John testifies to the fundamental truths of our holy faith, namely, *that Jesus Christ is the promised Redeemer, true God and true man.* The *promised Redeemer,* when he says: "The same is he that shall come after me," that is: This is he whose way I prepare, and who shall come after me and accomplish the work of Redemption. *True man,* when he says: "Who shall come after," for John was older than Jesus, who, six months after John was conceived, assumed human nature in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. *True God,* when he says: "Who is preferred before me," whereby he testifies to his eternal generation from the Father, and consequently to his divinity; wherefore he added: "The latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose."

(*a.*) John, by divine inspiration, knows Jesus as the God-Man and as the Redeemer, and preaches this consoling mystery to the embassy of the high council. But they pay little attention to it; they are content to know that John is not the Messias, and care little about the Messias himself whom John announces to them as then living. If John had spoken of the coming king as one who would free them from the hateful yoke of the Romans, who would make them rich and powerful, I doubt not that they would have listened with pleasure and esteemed themselves happy to serve such a king. It was ever thus, and always will be with

worldy-minded people. If only wealth can be acquired, ambition gratified, or their immediate plans furthered, they spare neither labor nor pains. But for the salvation of their souls they will not move a finger. They sacrifice many days and weeks to pleasures and amusements, while an exercise of devotion or divine worship appears too long if they must be present only for half an hour. They listen to worldly and even sinful discourses with great pleasure, but during a sermon on Sunday they are distracted, they yawn, and go to sleep. To a horse-race, a pigeon-shooting match or some other degrading diversion, they can walk miles, but a walk of a mile or two to church is too much. Does this parish count among its members such worldly-minded Christians?

(*b.*) St. John humbles himself profoundly when he comes to speak of Jesus. I believe it was easy for him to do this, for although he was an Elias, and more than a prophet, in comparison with Jesus, the Son of God, he looked upon himself as nothing. What is man, what are the angels, compared with God? I therefore recommend you frequently to say, with St. Francis, "Who art thou, O Lord, and who am I?" If you contemplate God in his infinite perfections, and then consider your poverty and sinfulness, you will find no difficulty in humbling yourselves before him, and in saying within yourselves: "My God, thou art everything, and I am nothing."

PERORATION.

The gospel concludes with these words: *These things were done in Bethania, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.* This Bethania, beyond the Jordan, which must not be confounded with the other Bethania near Jerusalem, the place of residence of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary Magdalene, was the spot where Josue had led the chosen people of Israel into the Promised Land across the Jordan, and where Jesus went into the Jordan to be baptized by John. Bethania was a place sanctified by these two important events, and its special mention in the text serves as an admonition to us that now, in this holy season, we must descend spiritually into the river Jordan, and by worthy fruits of penance purify our hearts from all stains of sin, so that we may be made worthy to enter with Jesus, whose type Josue was, into heaven the true Promised Land. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

JESUS CHRIST THE REDEEMER OF THE WORLD, FORETOLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not.—John 1: 26.

"There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not." John could truly say this to the Jews; for Jesus was already thirty years old, and about to begin his public life. Up to this time it could not be imputed to the Jews as a sin that they did not know their Messias and believe in him; for he had not yet revealed himself to them. But after he had made his appearance in public, and by his eminently holy life, heavenly doctrine, and numberless miracles, had proved himself to be the promised Redeemer, their unbelief was no longer excusable. —*John* 1: 29. They had but to apply the prophecies concerning the future Redeemer to Jesus, and they were bound to say: Yes, Jesus is truly the Messias promised by God; for we see that in him all things that were prophesied concerning the Messias are being fulfilled. Let us reflect to-day on these prophecies. Hear what the prophets have foretold —

I. Concerning the coming of the Redeemer;
II. Concerning his life, sufferings and death;
III. Concerning the events after his death.

PART I.

1. The prophets foretold the coming of the Redeemer not only in general, but they also mentioned the *time and place*, as well as *other circumstances of his advent.* The patriarch Jacob, who lived over seventeen hundred years before Christ, foretold the time when Christ, the Redeemer, should come. Blessing his son Juda he said: "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till HE come that is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of nations."—*Gen.* 49: 10. According to this prophecy, the Redeemer would come only when a king of the tribe of Juda was no longer reigning over the Jews. This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus, for when he was born the Jews

had no longer a king from the tribe of Juda, but were under the dominion of Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor.

2. The prophet Daniel, who lived more than five hundred years before Christ, specified still more accurately the advent of the Messias. One day, whilst at prayer, the Archangel Gabriel appeared and revealed to him that from the time when Jerusalem should be built up again to the time of Christ there should elapse sixty-nine weeks (of years), that is 483 years; in the middle of the seventieth week, that is, after four hundred and eighty-six years and a half, Christ should be slain, and that after the lapse of the seventy weeks (of years), that is, after 490 years, the Jews should be rejected and their city and temple be destroyed.—*Dan.* 9: 24-27. This prophecy again we see fulfilled in Jesus to the very letter. From the time when Artaxerxes Longimanus allowed the captive Jews to rebuild Jerusalem until the time when Christ began to preach and to exercise his office as Messias, exactly sixty-nine weeks (of years), or 483 years, elapsed; in the middle of the seventieth week, that is, after about three years and a half of his public life, Jesus died on the cross; consequently after the lapse of seventy weeks (of years), or after 490 years, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the Jews were scattered over the whole world.

3. But the prophets foretold not only the time, but also the *place of the birth* of the Redeemer. Thus Micheas says (5: 2): "*And thou, Bethlehem*, Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall HE come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel; and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity." The prophet does not speak of a temporal king, since he ascribes to him eternity, consequently divinity, but of the Messias, who shall be God himself. The Jews also understood this prophecy to refer to Christ, the Redeemer. —*Matt.* 2: 4-6. Jesus was conceived at Nazareth, but in consequence of an edict from Augustus Cæsar, Mary and Joseph were obliged to repair to Bethlehem, to have their names enrolled there, and thus, by the wonderful Providence of God, the prophecy of Micheas was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

4. The prophets also foretold *other circumstances* concerning the coming of the Messias. They explicitly declared that he should be a descendant of David (*Is.* 11: 1); that he should be born of a virgin (*Is.* 7: 13, 14); that at his birth kings should come from the East, bringing presents, and adore him (*Is.* 60: 1-7: *Ps.* 71: 10); that on his account the children of Bethlehem and vicinity should be killed, wherefore there should be much lamentation and mourning (*Jer.* 31: 15): that he should go into Egypt, whence God, his Father, would bring him back again.—*Osee* 11: 1. We

know from the gospel that all these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

PART II.

The prophets also foretold the life, sufferings, and death of the promised Redeemer.

1. According to the prophecies the Redeemer was to have a precursor, who would raise his voice in the desert and preach penance.—*Is.* 40: 3, 4; *Mal.* 3: 4. Jesus had such a forerunner. The prophet Isaias describes the office of Jesus, saying of him that he would preach truth and justice, not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax (*Is.* 42: 1-4); that he would heal the contrite of heart, and preach release to captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up.—*Is.* 61: 1. Almost every page of Bible history teaches us that Jesus did all this. The prophets foretold of him that he would perform many miracles: Thus Isaias says: "God himself will come and will save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free."—*Is.* 35: 4-6.

2. The prophets likewise foretold the *sufferings and death of the Redeemer,* not only in general, but in their most minute circumstances. The Saviour shall be valued at thirty pieces of silver, and be betrayed.—*Zach.* 11: 12; *Ps.* 40: 10. He shall be despised, mocked, struck, and spit upon (*Is.* 50: 6); he shall be a worm, and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.—*Ps.* 21: 7. He shall be wounded so terribly that he shall be thought a leper, and as one stricken by God and afflicted.—*Is.* 53: 4-8. He shall be reputed with the wicked; they shall give him vinegar and gall to drink, and pierce his hands and feet.—*Is.* 53: 12; *Ps.* 68: 22, and 21: 17. He shall be laughed to scorn, and people will say: "He hoped in the Lord; let him deliver him, let him save him, seeing he delighted in him."—*Ps.* 21: 8, 9. They shall part his garments amongst them; and upon his vesture they shall casts lots (*Ps.* 21: 19); and in his dereliction he shall exclaim: "O God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me?—*Ps.* 21: 2. Christ shall be slain; and the people that deny him shall not be his.—*Dan.* 9: 26. Who is not astonished at these prophecies? In reading them we almost read the history of Christ's passion, as recorded by the four Evangelists. And yet these prophets lived hundreds, some even thousands, of years before Christ.

Part III.

The prophecies have reference also to the *events after the death of Christ*, especially to his *Resurrection and Ascension*, to the *descent of the Holy Ghost*, to the *destruction of Jerusalem*, and the *rejection of the Jews;* and lastly, to the *conversion of the Gentiles*, and the *propagation and perpetuity of the Church.*

1. David foretold the *Resurrection of the Messias* in these words: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption."—*Ps.* 15: 10. The Psalmist here introduces the Messias as speaking, and says that his soul shall not remain in limbo, nor his body corrupt in the grave; therefore that he shall rise again.

David also foretold *his Ascension*, saying: "Thou hast ascended on high (into heaven); thou hast led captivity captive (thou leadest with thee the souls of the saints who were captives in limbo); thou hast received gifts in men."—*Ps.* 67: 19.

The prophet Joel foretold the *Descent of the Holy Ghost* with his divine gifts, saying: "And it shall come to pass after this that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Moreover, upon my servants and handmaids in those days I will pour forth my spirit." —*Joel* 2: 28, 29. A proof that the prophet here speaks of the descent of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost is the passage in *Acts* 2: 16, and following.

2. The prophets foretold the *destruction of Jerusalem*, and the *rejection of the Jews*. We read in Daniel (9: 26, 27): "Christ shall be slain; and the people that deny him shall not be his. And a people with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be waste; and after the end of the war the appointed desolation; and he shall confirm the covenant with many in one week (the seventieth); and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail: and there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation, and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation, and to the end." Here Daniel prophecies the fate of Jerusalem and of the Jewish people—that Jerusalem with its temple should be destroyed by a strange people, and that this devastation should last for ever, that the Jews should be no longer the chosen people of God, but that they should be rejected by him whom they had rejected. History attests that this prophecy was fulfilled. Thirty-seven years after the death of Christ, the Romans, under Titus, entered the city of Jerusalem, and completely destroyed both city and

temple and they have not been rebuilt to this day, for the attempt of Julian the Apostate to restore the temple was brought to naught by visible miracles. The Jews could not remain in their own country, they ceased be to be a nation, and are now scattered over the face of the earth.

3. The prophets also foretold the *conversion of the Gentiles*, the *propagation and perpetuity of the Church*. Of the *conversion of the Gentiles* David says: "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall be converted to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight; for the kingdom is the Lord's; and he shall have dominion over the nations."—*Ps.* 21: 28, 29. Isaias, David, and Daniel foretold the *propagation and perpetuity of the Church:* "And in the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it."—*Is.* 2: 2. "All kings of the earth shall adore him (the Messias), all nations shall serve him."—*Ps.* 71: 11. After speaking of the four great empires of the world, the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman, the prophet Daniel says of the kingdom of Christ, the Church: "In the days of those kingdoms the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and his kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people; and it shall break in pieces, and shall consume all these kingdoms; and itself shall stand for ever."—*Dan.* 2: 44.

History tells us how literally these prophecies were fulfilled. In spite of all persecutions, the Church has spread over the whole earth, and to-day there is not a people on the globe among whom there are no Christians. The existence of the Church for the last eighteen hundred years, and the promise of Christ "that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her" (*Matt.* 16: 18), are sureties that she will exist until the end of time.

PERORATION.

As you see, all that the prophets foretold of the promised Messias has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. If we put these prophecies together we shall have a compendium of the life of Christ, nay, a complete history of the Church. From this it evidently follows that the Redeemer, whom God promised to our first parents and many times subsequently announced, is no other than our divine Saviour, Jesus Christ. Let us return thanks to God for having given us unmistakable evidence of the truth of our faith, not only in the gospel, but also in the Sacred Scripture of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and God, without whom there is no salvation, "for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we can be saved."—*Acts* 4: 12.

Adhere to this principal and fundamental truth of our holy religion all the days of your life. But do also what is required in order to obtain salvation through Christ. "Put off . . . . the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth."—*Eph.* 4: 22-25. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL CELEBRATION OF ADVENT.

John confessed: I am not the Christ.—John 1: 20.

St. John having been asked by the deputies of the high council, "Who art thou?" most emphatically declared that he was not Christ but only his forerunner: he then directed them to Christ, telling them that he was already walking visibly among them, but that they did not know him. The long Advent of the Old Testament, lasting four thousand years, is at an end. Jesus Christ will now appear and accomplish the work of Redemption. The holy season of Advent reminds us of this consoling truth. It embraces four weeks, or at least four Sundays, in memory of the four thousand years which elapsed between the promise and the coming of the Redeemer. Our Advent is of very ancient date, for according to St. Gregory the Great it was celebrated in Rome in the sixth century. In the seventh century it was celebrated in all Christian countries, with fasting and other devotions of piety. Let us briefly consider how the Church in our time celebrates Advent—

I. In the Sunday masses.
II. In the Rorate, or Mass of the Angels.

Part I.

Advent, like every other holy season, is celebrated in a particular manner in the divine offices, especially in the Sunday masses, the ceremonies of which I shall explain.

1. Mass on the four Sundays of Advent is celebrated in violet vestments. Violet is the color of penance, and therefore signifies that Advent is a time of penance. As man in the Old Law was obliged to do penance for his sins, that by belief in the coming Redeemer he might be saved from perdition, so penance is also necessary for us if we wish to become partakers of the grace of Redemption. The words of Christ are as true to-day as of old: "Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." —*Luke* 13: 5.

You must therefore employ the season of Advent in doing penance for your sins. If you be so unfortunate as to be in the state of sin, do penance without delay, in order to recover sanctifying grace, which you have forfeited. I sincerely hope that there is not one in this parish who will celebrate the approaching feast of Christmas in the state of sin. Make daily an act of sincere contrition for the sins of your past life, and perform works of penance, such as prayer, fasting, alms, in order to satisfy the justice of God and to expiate the temporal punishments due to sins already forgiven. The violet color of the vestments reminds you of this duty.

2. Mass is said in Advent at *altars which generally have a violet frontal.* This also has its signification. In the Old Law mankind had not the happiness of seeing the Redeemer, for he had not yet appeared upon earth. There were no altars upon which the holy sacrifice was offered; the chosen people of God were obliged to content themselves with oblations symbolical of the sacrifice of Christ. On account of this, the good and pious mourned and lamented, longing ardently for Christ and his sacrifice. Of this desire and longing, of this want of something invisible, the altars concealed with a violet frontal are a symbol. They are at the same time an earnest exhortation to us during this holy season of Advent to excite in ourselves a fervent desire for Jesus, and to beg of him to come with his grace into our hearts, and to abide there as in a tabernacle.

3. At mass on Sundays in Advent, according to the law of the Church, *the organ should not be used.* See Caer. Episc. Ed. typ. 1886. F. Pustet. Plain chant or other solemn vocal music should be employed, because Advent is a time of penance, and joyful, festive music is not in accordance with its spirit. As the Jews in their captivity in Babylon laid aside their musical instruments, and in mournful lamentations sighed to heaven for liberty, so the organ during Advent should be silent, to represent the mourning of the ancient world over its spiritual bondage, and its sorrowful longing for the Redeemer. The third Sunday of Advent, however, forms an exception; the organ is heard again, because

the Church expresses her joy that half of the time of expectation is already passed, and the day of the coming of our Lord and Redeemer is drawing nigh.

4. In the mass for the Sundays of Advent we have no *Gloria*. The *Gloria* is the song of praise which the angels chanted at the birth of Christ. As however the birth of Christ is not solemnized, but only expected, the *Gloria* is not sung in Advent. At the end of the mass the priest does not say, *Ite missa est*, but *Benedicamus Domino*. The *Ite missa est*, "Go, you are dismissed," expresses the dismissal of the faithful assisting at mass; they may go home, for mass is over. The *Benedicamus Domino*, "Let us bless the Lord," is, on the contrary, an admonition for the people to remain in church for some time yet, and to prolong their prayers, for Advent is a time of penance in which we must devote ourselves to prayer with more zeal and fervor than at other times. Since the patriarchs and prophets were often on their knees, and in fervent prayers sighed that the heavens might be opened and the earth bud forth a Saviour, it is but just that in Advent, especially on Sundays, we should prolong our devotions, and adore Jesus in The Most Holy Sacrament. These are the rules which the Church prescribes for the masses on Sundays during Advent. They represent Advent to us as a time of penance, and call upon us to prepare ourselves by wholesome exercises of penance for the proper celebration of Christmas.

Part II.

The *Rorate Mass*, or *Mass of the Angels*, is really an Advent mass [a local usage], because it is said only in Advent. It is called the Rorate Mass, because the Introit begins with the words: *Rorate coeli desuper*—"Drop down dew, ye heavens." It is also called the Mass of the Angels because the gospel assigned to it narrates how the Archangel Gabriel brought the Blessed Virgin Mary the message that she should conceive of the Holy Ghost.

Let us consider when and how this mass is celebrated and the *purport* of it.

1. It is *said early in the morning*, before the rising of the sun. It is still night when the bells ring out and give the first signal to the faithful, addressing to them, as it were, the words of the Apostle: "Brethren, know that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."—*Rom.* 13: 11. The faithful assemble in the church, where the mass is to be said. Whilst the world outside is veiled in darkness, the church, especially the altar, is lighted up with many candles—a symbol rich in meaning. What does the

mysterious obscurity outside signify but the darkness of idolatry, of sin, and of spiritual misery, in which man, after separating himself from God, lay buried? while the burning lights in the church remind us of Jesus Christ, the light of the world: "The Orient from on high hath visited us, to enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death."—*Luke* 1: 78, 79. The Rorate Mass, however, is not said at midnight, but in the morning, shortly before the break of day, for the reason that it refers to Mary, the spiritual dawn, which immediately preceded Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice.

The Rorate Mass has *a joyful celebration* with solemn chant and the accompaniment of the organ. This is beautifully significant, first, because this Mass represents the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ as a mystery which must fill every Christian heart with joy; secondly, because it announces the mystery of the Incarnation near at hand, referring to Gabriel, who approaches Mary, and brings her the message that she has been selected by God to become the Mother of his Son.

After mass the *Angelus* is said alternately by priest and people. This prayer commemorates the mystery of the Incarnation, and is very appropriate for the Rorate Mass, because in it the mystery of the Incarnation is also celebrated. But as the whole of Advent is instituted in memory of the Incarnation, you should during this time say the Angelus three times a day with *particular devotion.*

2. The whole of the Proper of this mass refers to the mystery of the Incarnation in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

(*a.*) The Introit has reference to this mystery: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour.*—*Isaias* 45: 8. These words express the mournful sighing of the people in the Old Law for the promised Redeemer, and form the principal idea of Advent. This longing for the coming of the Redeemer must also animate us; for if Jesus is to come into our hearts with his grace we must have a longing for him. To him who has no desire to possess Jesus, our Christmas will be as little of a festival of grace as the first Christmas at Bethlehem was to Herod, to the high-priest, the Scribes, and the Pharisees. The Incarnation of Christ is also the prevailing sentiment in the three prayers of the Rorate Mass.

(*b.*) The *epistle* contains the prophecy of Isaias as to the conception and birth of Christ. By the command of God, the prophet had called upon Achaz, King of Judea, to ask for a sign from heaven, that his faith might thereby be strengthened,

But Achaz, perverse as he was, rejected this invitation, and told the prophet that he would ask for no sign. The prophet reprimanded him, and told him that God himself would give a wonderful sign, which he recalled to him in these words: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel."—*Is.* 7: 14. The virgin of whom the prophet here speaks is the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Emmanuel, that is, God-with-us, whom she was to conceive and bring forth, is Jesus Christ.

3. The fulfilment of this prophecy is narrated in the *gospel.* It is the same gospel which is read on the feast of the Annunciation of Mary, and treats of the mystery of the Incarnation. At the very moment when Mary said to the angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word," the greatest miracle of the love and mercy of God was performed. The Son of God assumed human nature in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary. This gospel forms the boundary line between the Old and the New Testaments; with it the time of expectation is concluded, and the fulfilment of grace begins. For this reason the Church celebrates the Rorate Mass early in the morning, before dawn, for the night is passed, and day is at hand.

PERORATION.

Reflect on the great and solemn mysteries which the Church presents to you, in the masses celebrated on the Sundays of Advent, and especially in the Rorate Masses, and labor with renewed zeal that you may employ this holy season of Advent for the salvation of your soul. Contemplate the great misery into which the human race had fallen; reflect upon the mercies of God, who in the very beginning promised, and after four thousand years sent, a Redeemer. Consider also what you would be without a Redeemer, and what you are, or rather still may be through him. Practice these holy exercises which are necessary in order to worthily prepare for Christmas and to participate in the graces of that festival. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

MANY ACT IN CONFESSION AS IF THEY WERE PROPHETS, OR ELIAS, OR EVEN CHRIST.

And he confessed, and did not deny; and he confessed.—John 1:20.

I do not know which to admire more in John, his love of truth or his humility. "He confessed and did not deny; and he confessed: I am not the Christ." This is the truth. The other two questions as to whether he was Elias or a prophet he answers in the negative: this is both truth and humility. He calls himself "the voice of one crying in the wilderness. This is also truth and humility. He conceals all his prerogatives, and humbles himself most profoundly when he comes to speak of Jesus Christ; this is humility. Oh, that we all would be as truthful and humble as St. John, especially where truth and humility are of paramount importance, namely, in confession. But it is just in confession that many are destitute of these two principal virtues, the love of truth and humility, for they conduct themselves as if they were—

I. Prophets, or
II. Elias, or
III. Christ himself.

PART I.

Some act in confession as if they were prophets.

1. The prophets foretold future things, but often *so obscurely* that their prophecies could not be understood until they were fulfilled. In the New Testament we have the Apocalypse, or Revelation of St. John, which refers to the future of the Church, but it is so obscure and mysterious that during these eighteen hundred years it has not been satisfactorily explained, and very likely will not be until the end of the world, when all that is obscure will be made clear.

Now, if a penitent confesses so unintelligibly, so mysteriously and so indirectly, that the confessor knows not what sins are

confessed to him, that penitent behaves as a prophet. And many such prophets come into the confessional. They say, for instance, "I have had wicked thoughts," but they do not say what kind of wicked thoughts, or whether they consented to them; or, "I have had evil desires," and mean by these evil desires, abominable sins against purity; or they say: "Like others, I am subject to human frailty," and this frailty is the vice of impurity; or, "I sinned against the second, third, sixth, or eighth commandment." Is not this the language of a prophet? Have the prophets ever spoken so obscurely as these and similar penitents? I have all due respect for the prophets, but in the confessional you must not imitate them; you must state things clearly, that is, you must mention every sin intelligibly and distinctly; otherwise the confessor can form no opinion as to the state of your soul and you expose yourselves to the danger of making a bad confession.

2. The prophets were obliged by the command of God to reprove and denounce the sins of others, and represent to them the greatness and culpability of their misdeeds, viz., the sins of a king or a whole people. Examples: *I. Kings* 2: 27, *etc.; I. Kings* 15: 18, *etc.; II. Kings* 12: 7, *etc.; III. Kings*, 14: 6, *etc.* Many penitents resemble the prophets also in this, that they do not confess their own sins, but the sins of others; for instance, the sins of their husband, of their wife, or of their neighbor. Many throw the blame on others, as Adam did on Eve, and Eve on the serpent. They throw the blame on the husband, on the wife, on companions, on seducers, and try in this manner to veil their true character, and to represent themselves as either entirely, or at least partly innocent. This is also wrong. You must confess your own sins, and not the sins of others; what others have done does not concern you; for this reason you say at the beginning of your confession: "I accuse myself," and not, "I accuse my husband, my wife, my neighbor." Neither are you to excuse or vindicate yourself before your confessor, when you know in your inmost heart that you are culpable before God. Accuse yourself as you find yourself guilty, after a good and sufficient examination of conscience, and take care lest self-love blind you.

Part II.

Some act in confession as if they were Elias.

1. We read of Elias, the greatest of the prophets, that he went up by *a whirlwind into heaven.—IV. Kings* 2: 11. Those Christians who wish to do the whole business of confession, as it were, flying, are like this prophet. How do they act at their examination of conscience? They think hastily of their sins and are satisfied with

the knowledge of those that lie on the surface; to penetrate into the nooks and corners of their hearts, and into the most secret recesses of their souls, is for them too laborious a task; in a few minutes they have finished their examination of conscience, whereas a considerable time was necessary. Such a careless examination of conscience may very easily lead to an unworthy and invalid confession. If they are obliged to wait for a short time till their turn comes, they get weary, and even impatient, instead of making use of the time for salutary exercises of humility contrition and good resolutions. In the confessional they want everything done quickly, as it were in a whirlwind; the confessor is to ask them no questions, they do not wish to be instructed, admonished or reprehended; he is expected, after hearing their sins, to impose a light penance, pronounce absolution, and allow them to depart. If a confessor do his duty, if he try to perfect their very incomplete confession, if he ask the necessary questions, if he direct the attention of the penitents to the disordered state of their conscience and to the danger of their salvation, and prescribe the necessary remedies, they say: "Oh, how tedious this confessor is! he detained me ever so long; I'll never go to him again if I can help it." Dear Christians, in your confessions be not as Elias, who went up in a whirlwind to heaven. Take your time, so that you may do this important work properly, and give the confessor time to do his duty to you, that you may not confess unto damnation, but unto salvation.

2. It is said of Elias that a *fiery chariot and fiery horses came, and that he went up by a whirlwind into heaven.—IV. Kings* 2: 11. It was not necessary for Elias to exert himself very much in his ascent to heaven; all that was to be done was to sit in the chariot drawn by fiery horses; thus without any labor he went up into heaven. If a Christian takes things easily at his confessions, if he makes little or no preparation for them, and therefore examines his conscience only in a superficial manner, does not consider the atrocity and evil consequences of his sins, nor endeavor to excite himself to a hearty contrition, nor care for an entire accusation of them, but leaves all this to his confessor, he conducts himself as did Elias; he sits at his own confession, as it were, in a chariot, and wishes to be drawn by his confessor, as by horses. This, indeed, would be very easy and comfortable, but it is not right. The confessor may and will assist you if he thinks it necessary, if he sees that something is wanting in your confession, but the penitent must do all that he can in order to make a good confession. If he does not do so, he certainly exposes himself to the danger of making a sacrilegious confession. Those who are not solicitous either about a good examination of conscience or a full accusation of all their sins

must not forget this, but bear in mind that the confessor will question them only when he apprehends that something may be wanting for the integrity of the Sacrament. But if the confessor, thinking that you have already confessed everything, does not question you, or if with all his questions he does not reach the sins you may have committed, what then? If you yourself make no effort to know and understand the grievousness of your sins, and to be sorry for them accordingly, do you imagine that the confessor can make you so? He may, indeed, try to do it, but his success will be very doubtful. And what if there should be a great number of penitents crowding around the confessional? Can he spend all his time with you? At your confession, do not sit like Elias in his chariot, but exert yourself. It is only by your own exertions that a good confession will come.

The Sacred Scripture relates that at his going up into heaven *Elias left his mantle on earth.* It fell from him when he was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven.—*IV. Kings* 2: 13. Many penitents leave in the confessional, not themselves, but their mantle. And who are they who do this? All those who observe only outwardly what belongs to confession, but inwardly are not changed and converted. They confess, but without true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment; they do not think of abandoning their bad habits, of avoiding the occasions of sin, of restoring ill-gotten goods, of forgiving injuries and offenses. They fancy that once they have confessed their sins and received absolution it is all right. If you ask such a penitent: How it is with your former confessions, is everything in order? he will answer, Oh, it is all right; I always confessed all my sins, and received absolution. What a delusion? If you leave only the mantle and not yourself in the confessional, that is, if you only observe outward appearances at confession, you are not truly converted; if you take the old man of sin with you out of the confessional, your confession will be worthless, it will be to you a chariot that will land you, not in heaven, but in hell. Let us leave in the confessional not only the mantle but also ourselves, the old man, and let us go away from it converted and renewed in spirit.

Part III.

Some act in their confessions as if they were Christ.

1. Jesus is omniscient. "He knew what was in man."—*John* 2:25. "Now we know that thou knowest all things, and that thou needest not that any man ask thee."—*John* 16: 30. Some Christians act in the confessional as if they knew everything that is requisite for salvation. If the confessor instruct them on the duties of

their holy religion and state of life they take it amiss, and not unfrequently tell him so to his face: "I know all this: I need no instruction on this point." Thus they act as if they were Christ, the omniscient Son of God. But is this right? Certainly not. They may be very wise and prudent in worldly affairs, but in the affair of salvation they are often very ignorant. The priest perceives this from their confession, and for this reason he finds himself obliged to give the necessary instruction. Moreover, it betrays pride of heart for a penitent not to be willing to receive instruction, and pride is always reprehensible, and especially in the confessional, where only humility finds grace. Away, then, with this assumed omniscience in the confessional; there is only room for a docile person.

2. Christ said to the Jews: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"—*John* 8: 46. He who was without a shadow of sin could truly ask this question. "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."—*Heb.* 7: 26. Who would believe it? Many act in the confessional as if they were Christ. They say plainly: I am a good Christian; no one can say anything evil of me. Or they endeavor, at least, to appear innocent. I have not any great sins to tell, they say, and then they mention this or that which is either no sin at all or only an insignificant fault; or they mention sins and add that they did not commit them; or they enumerate their virtues and good works. Oh, how differently they would act if they were more humble and not so blinded. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."—*I. John* 1: 8. If any one after a careful examination finds that he has committed no grievous sin since his last confession, let him look at the sinfulness of his past life, and he will find matter enough to confess and repent of. Many are offended when the confessor calls their attention to their sins and the grievousness of them, and think that he sees sins where there are none, and that he magnifies molehills into mountains. Of the two, who can better judge what sin is, and how grievous it is,—the penitent, who is frequently biased by self-love and the maxims of the world, or the confessor, who, calmly considering everything, judges according to the law of God?

PERORATION.

Let St. John, who without a moment's hesitation emphatically denied that he was either Christ, Elias, or a prophet, ever be your pattern in the confessional. Say to yourself: When I go to confession, I shall be neither Christ, nor Elias, nor a prophet; I shall be no *prophet;* I shall confess my own sins candidly and

sincerely, and not the sins of others. I will not be *Elias;* I will not rush through the important business of confession, but will employ the necessary time for the completion of so great an act by examining my conscience diligently and carefully, by confessing my sins as accurately as possible, and by exciting myself to true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, and I will be spiritually changed and renewed. I will arise and leave the confestional a new man. I will not be *Christ,* but will return thanks to my confessor when he instructs me in what is needful for my salvation. If you act thus at your confession you will make it well, and obtain of God the forgiveness of your sins. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

CONSCIENCE.

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.—John 1 : 23.

The heart of the sinner, especially of the habitual sinner, is like a wilderness. In a wilderness you look in vain for fertile fields, grassy meadows, or lofty trees; you cannot even discover a spring at which to quench your burning thirst; everything is dry and barren—an immeasurable, sandy plain. Such is the heart of the sinner. You find there no holy thoughts, no pious aspirations, no good resolutions, no elevation of mind, no love of God. The life of grace is perfectly dormant, and produces no virtue, no good and meritorious works.

John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, upbraiding the multitudes that flocked to him, and exhorting them, in forcible words, to do penance and amend their lives. In like manner, a voice cries out in the heart of the sinner, that spiritual wilderness, placing his injustice and ingratitude towards God vividly before his eyes, and exhorting him to return from those evil ways that are leading him to destruction. This voice is our conscience, that mysterious monitor within us, which tells us what is right and what is wrong, which urges us to good and to avoid evil, which rewards and punishes, according as we obey or disobey its admonitions. I shall speak to-day about conscience—

I. As our guide, if we obey it;
II. As our tormentor, if we disobey it.

PART I.

Conscience is our guide, if we obey it; and it is—

1. *A judicious,*
2. *A brave and courageous guide.*

1. (*a.*) Conscience holds the place of God. God himself has inscribed it in indelible characters on our heart (*Rom.* 2: 14-16), that in his name it may tell us what is his holy will, what we must do, what avoid. When the children of Israel went out of Egypt through the desert, God gave them a pillar of light for a guide. During the day it was like a common cloud, but at night it resembled a pillar of fire. This pillar or cloud went before them on their way through the desert, by day and by night, showing them the way they were to take, so that they could not go astray. This was their guide for forty years, until they entered the land of Chanaan.—*Exodus* 13: 21, 22. Our conscience is such a pillar or cloud, which always goes before us, to point out the right way; if we come to a spot where the road branches, one path leading to the right, the other to the left, it tells us which to take, that we may not got go astray; it never abondons us, but remains our faithful guide until we have finished our earthly pilgrimage. And as the Israelites, no one excepted, had the pillar or cloud for their guide, and had only to open their eyes to see it before them day and night, so all men, whether pagans or Christians, sinners or just, learned or unlearned, have a conscience, and all who listen to it receive information and advice regarding everything pertaining to duty.

(*b.*) How grateful should we be to God for having given us in our conscience so faithful and trusty a guide? Let us always obey it. If in times of doubt or temptation it tells you: This is right, this is the will of God, do it. If it tells you: This is wrong, this displeases God, do it not. Do not suffer yourselves to be misguided by your passions or the wicked maxims of the world. If they tell you that this gain which you seek by illicit means is not sinful, since others do not think it wrong; that the aversion which you entertain in your heart for a certain person is not reprehensible—for who could like such a person? that these unchaste desires and actions are only human frailties with which God who knows our weak nature will be indulgent; that this cursing and blaspheming does not signify much, because it is done in the heat of passion: if they tell you that familiarity with that person is not

irregular, because you are going to marry her; that you are allowed to read that newspaper, although inimical to the Church, because others more learned than you read it—do not believe them, for through them God, the eternal Truth, does not speak, but the devil, that liar from the beginning, who only seeks to lead you into error and sin, and finally to eternal perdition. Never act contrary to your conscience, for if you do you sin, because you do not obey God. If ever you be in doubt as to whether or not that which your conscience tells you is the voice of God, inquire in the confessional; there you will receive the right answer.

2. *Conscience is a courageous guide.*

(*a.*) It resembles St. John the Baptist who candidly told the truth to all that came to him in the desert. He spoke thus to the Pharisees and Sadducees: "Ye offspring of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? The axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire."—*Luke* 3: 7-9. He upbraided even King Herod on account of his immoral life, and full of holy zeal said to him: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."—*Mark* 6: 18. In like manner conscience knows no fear, has no human respect, cannot be bribed, flatters not, hides nothing, palliates and diminishes nothing, explains nothing away, but tells the plain truth to every one. If you be about to do something that is good, it encourages you, and after you have done it, it praises you, but if you be on the point of doing something wrong, it warns you against it, and as soon as you have accomplished it, it rebukes you and says: You have sinned, you have offended God, and deserve punishment. "In this office," says St. Chrysostom, "conscience is indefatigable, so that how often soever it may have warned and admonished already, it still warns and admonishes, and will never cease to do so till we draw our last breath."

(*b.*) What a blessing to have such a true and courageous guide on our journey through life. Your best friends may deceive you, for, from inordinate love for you, they may sanction that which deserves censure; they may overlook your faults, even considerable ones, and even praise them as virtues. But your conscience will never do this. No matter who you are, or under what circumstances you may live, it tells you the plain, unvarnished truth. It is the only true friend you have, who has the courage, as often as is needful to tell you the bitter truth, in order to guard you against danger and misfortune. Look upon conscience as your best friend and be guided by it. Frequently enter into

yourself and listen, that you may ever hear its voice, for in the tumult of the world the spiritual ear is often deafened, so that we do not hear what our conscience says. If you always obey its voice it will give you, in life and in death, true consolation; on the contrary, if you do not heed its inspirations, but harden your heart, it will be your tormentor.

PART II.

If we do not obey the voice of conscience it will be our tormentor in life as well as in death.

1. *In life.* King Assuerus was one day dining with Esther, his virtuous queen. Aman, his prime minister, who was the only one invited, was also present. Dinner being over the queen suddenly petitioned the king to save her life and the lives of her people. "For," said she, "we are given up, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, to perish." The king, incensed, asked: "Who is this, and of what power, that he should do these things?" Esther said: "It is this Aman that is our adversary and our most wicked enemy." Aman, hearing this, was forthwith astonished, and not being able to bear the countenance of the angry king, fell like a stone upon the couch. The accusation of Esther had crushed him.—*Esther* 7.

(*a.*) Conscience causes the sinner a similar torment when it upbraids him for his wicked deeds. What have you done? it cries out to him: into what a miserable state have you fallen? You have offended God, lost his grace, and if you die in this state whither will you go? I ask you, sinner, has your conscience never reproached you thus? After a wicked action, did you not become uneasy, sad, and melancholy? Did you not feel miserable? Were you not ashamed of yourself? Did you not tremble at the thought of judgment and eternity?

(*b.*) What increases the torments of the sinner is the circumstance that his conscience upbraids him secretly. If one be afflicted and sad, one seeks and finds relief and comfort in revealing one's secret sorrow to sympathizing friends. Not so he who has a bad conscience; he is tormented, and yet he must not and can not make his torments known. Others may perhaps have a good opinion of him; but his conscience takes occasion therefrom to torment him the more, for it says to him: "People think well of you, but you are a contemptible wretch, a hypocrite; do you think that you can deceive God as you deceive man?" If an adulterous husband is treated by his virtuous wife with affection and kindness, not having any suspicion of his base infidelity;

if a son or a daughter, who in secret is addicted to debaucheries, enjoys the special love of parents, sisters, and brothers, and is even praised for presumed good conduct—does not a sword of sorrow and remorse pierce their guilty heart? Are they not bound to say within themselves: "If they only knew what I have done, with what pain and disgust would they turn from me."

(*c.*) *The worst of it is that you can not get rid of this tormentor.* Surius, in the life of St. Medard, relates an incident of a thief who stole an ox belonging to the Saint. The ox had a bell attached to his neck, by the sound of which the thief might easily have been betrayed; he therefore stopped it up with grass, and drove the ox home without being discovered. But the animal was scarcely in the stable when the bell began to ring of itself, as if it would call all the neighbors together in order to reveal the theft. Struck with fear and terror, the thief ran back into the stable, to stop up the bell again, but could not to so, for it continued to ring the louder. He tore the bell from the neck of the ox, took out the tongue, and hid it in a box. But even there the bell ceased not to ring, so that the thief at last, full of anguish, confessed his evil deed to the Saint, after having returned the ox. Conscience is like this bell, for it gives the sinner no rest until he is converted. He may do what he will to silence his conscience, but he can not do it. Let him turn his thoughts to temporal things, let him enjoy all possible pleasures, give himself up to dissipation, let him travel all over the world, let him pray, fast, distribute all his goods to the poor, the bell of his conscience will still ring and give him no rest, no peace, till he removes the cause, till he is converted. In the conscience of the sinner there is a continual tempest; conflicting waves of remorse and temptation, anguish and despair, rise and strike against one another perpetually. He feels like David, who says: "There is no peace to my bones, because of my sins." Cain was not forthwith destroyed for the murder of his brother, but should have been moved to repentance by finding no rest upon earth. Even Judas was visited with stings of conscience before he took his life. Joseph's brothers were truly converted by the afflictions caused by their own guilt. Remorse of conscience is intended to convert sinners.

2. *In death.* If one have a violent toothache, there is a remedy perhaps which will take away the pain, or at least give relief for some time. Thus a sinner can, as long as he is in good health deaden his remorse of conscience, or entirely get rid of it for the time being. He may seek diversions and distractions, and then the voice of conscience is weakened, and consequently scarcely heard; it may even be silenced altogether by a riotous and

dissipated life. But the case is different in death, when the sinner can no longer divert his mind by means of pleasures or the gratification of his passions. Then conscience arises as his tormentor, which no earthly tyrant can equal in cruelty; then will begin for him a state similar to that of the damned. His conscience will now cause the years of his life to pass in review before his mind and show him all the trespasses of his childhood, the indulgence of the heated passions of his youth, the follies and injustices of his mature and declining years, all the sins of his eyes, ears, hands, feet, and of all the faculties of his soul, the violations of the commandments from the first to the last; it will show him the numberless opportunities he had for doing good, of which he either made no use or which he abused. His conscience will lead him into eternity and present to him the Divine Judge, before whom even the just tremble; will turn his eyes towards heaven, for which he never cared, and which will now be closed against him, and will open for him the fiery jaws of hell, which shall henceforth be his habitation for ever. Oh, what terror, what anguish, must seize the dying sinner! Who can describe his agony and despair?

Callat of Herbois, a man without religion or fear of God, perpetrated during the first French Revolution the most atrocious crimes, and among others he ordered, in the year 1793, at Lyons, sixteen hundred persons to die by the hand of the executioner or at the cannon's mouth. The judgment of God overtook this inhuman monster. In the year 1795 he was banished to Cayenne. After his arrival there he was hated and shunned by every one, and called a murderer and a destroyer of religion. In his misery he sometimes cried out: "I am punished; this total abandonment to which I am condemned is a hell to me." In the meantime he was seized and consumed by a violent fever. He cried out: "My God, my God, dare I hope to obtain the forgiveness of my crimes? Send me a comforter, send me somebody to release me from this terrible fire that consumes my entrails. My God, give rest to my heart." His last moments were so terrible that he was obliged to be removed to a distant house; a priest was sent for but meanwhile the unhappy wretch died, June 7th, 1797, with his eyes half-opened, and his countenance terribly distorted, streams of blood flowing from his mouth. Negroes buried him in a shallow grave, and his flesh became the food of wild beasts. Thus conscience is in life, and still more in death, a tormentor to all who do not obey its voice. Who would not avoid sin, or when he has sinned, immediately do penance, in order to escape this tormentor and obtain rest for his soul?

PERORATION.

I conclude with the admonition of Jesus: "Be at agreement

with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest, perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison." —*Matt.* 5: 25. Conscience is your adversary if you do not hear its voice, but it resists and torments you only for your good, to deter you from sin, and to lead you to penance in order to save your soul. Make at once an agreement with your adversary, your conscience, and silence it by a speedy and total conversion, that it may not deliver you to the judge to be condemned as an impenitent sinner. Listen to the voice of your conscience, which always, but especially in this holy season of Advent, cries out to you: "Make straight the way of the Lord." Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

WHY WE SHOULD ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH.

And he confessed, and did not deny.—John 1: 20.

We see to-day the ambassadors of the high council of Jerusalem standing before John and asking him the question: "Who art thou?" If John had answered: "I am Christ," he would have been guilty of a falsehood: yet we have reason to think that he would have found many adherents among the Jews, for many believed him to be the promised Messias. This belief was not without foundation; for the time was at hand when, according to the prophets, Christ should appear, and John possessed so many extraordinary prerogatives that it was easy to mistake him for the Messias. But he answers negatively and declares briefly and distinctly: "I am not the Christ." In like manner he answers the other two questions as to whether he was Elias or another prophet, although in a certain sense he could have answered these questions in the affirmative, without violating truth; but open and sincere as he was he would not make use of any duplicity. When the ambassadors importuned him to declare who he was, he styled himself the forerunner of Christ, and such he really was according to the prophecy of Isaias: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; make straight the way of the Lord."

John appears to us here as a man who values truth above all things, and who would not be guilty of the smallest lie or slightest insincerity. Let us learn from him to speak the truth always,

I. The will of God;
II. The love of our neighbor;
III. Our own welfare, impose this duty upon us.

PART I.

The will of God.

1. *Veracity is a natural gift which man receives from God his Creator.* Every one who preserves this inborn gift is frank, sincere, and truthful. Take for example a babe: it is cheerful, and laughs when it feels well, but cries when in pain or when it wants something; its exterior behavior is the true mirror or index of its interior feelings. Consider an older child that has already arrived at the age of discretion, and is yet uncorrupted. It speaks as it feels and thinks, it tells the truth whether advantage or disadvantage results therefrom. Deceit, dissimulation, and lies are strangers to it. Consider people of maturer years, who, like innocent children, still possess the innate gift of veracity; they also are without guile, and a lie never proceeds from their lips. St. Thomas Aquinas was one day walking with one of his companions. Suddenly the latter exclaimed: "Look, there flies an ox." Thomas looked up to see the flying ox; whereupon his companion laughed and asked the Saint whether he thought it possible for an ox to fly. He replied quite seriously: "I would rather have thought it possible for an ox to fly than for a Christian to lie."

What do you do when you tell a lie? You sin against the will of God, because you act unnaturally. No one doubts that he who drinks immoderately, or destroys one of the members of his body, or takes his own life, commits a sin, for he injures the natural gifts which he has received from the Creator. For the same reason, those persons sin who violate truth, because they do not esteem, but injure, the innate gift of veracity. Whenever, therefore, you feel tempted to tell a lie, say to yourself: I act unnaturally by telling a lie.

God is the model according to which we should conform ourselves as much as possible. "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."—*Matt.* 5: 48. Now, God is the eternal, infallible Truth, and falsehood is incompatible with his essence; he is a declared enemy to every lie. "God is not as a man, that he should lie, nor as the son of man, that he should be changed. Hath he said, then, and will he not do? Hath he spoken, and will he not fulfil?"—*Numb.* 23: 19. It is our duty to imitate God in his veracity, and therefore always to speak the truth; for falsity and untruth destroy in us his image and likeness, and render us like the devil, of whom Christ himself says that he is "a liar,

and the father of lies."—*John* 8: 44. The reproach, therefore, "You are of your father, the devil," which Christ uttered against the Scribes and Pharisees, applies equally to those who are addicted to telling lies.

What a detestable vice, therefore, is lying, since it is directly opposed to the veracity of God, which we ought to imitate; and besides, lying makes us children of the devil. Who would not guard against this vice, and cultivate the virtue of truthfulness?

2. *Goa expressly commands us to speak the truth always.* In the eighth commandment he forbids us to bear false witness, and enjoins us to speak the truth always. The same is to be said of all the passages of Sacred Scripture in which lying is forbidden and denounced as sinful and detestable, for example: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal faithfully please him."—*Prov.* 12: 22. "You shall not lie, neither shall any man deceive his neighbor."—*Levit.* 19: 11. "The mouth that belieth, killeth the soul."—*Wisd.* 1: 11. "A thief is better than a man that is always lying, but both of them shall inherit destruction."—*Ecclus.* 20: 27. "The manners of lying men are without honor."—*Ecclus.* 20: 28. "A lie is a foul blot in a man." —*Ibid.* 26. From the punishment which God inflicts upon liars even in this world, we may conclude how abominable to him is the sin of lying. Giezi, servant of Eliseus, had been guilty of a lie; the leprosy of Naaman came upon him and his posterity, and remained till they had all died out.—*IV. Kings* 5: 25-27. Ananias and Saphira fell dead at the feet of St. Peter in punishment for an apparently insignificant lie.—*Acts* 5: 2 *etc.* Since God punishes lying so severely, we can not but infer that lying is most hateful in his sight.

Pious Christians always guard against untruths. The millions of those who during persecutions preferred to suffer most cruel tortures and most painful deaths rather than deny their faith and save their lives by telling an untruth, may serve as examples. How much do those early Christians put to shame many of us who on account of every trifle, or for mere pastime, tell falsehoods.

PART II.

The love of our neighbor.

1. The love of our neighbor requires that ***we do unto others as we wish them to do unto us.*** Therefore Christ says: "All things, therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do to you do you also to them."—*Matt.* 7: 12. We require them to be sincere and to

tell us the truth. If we find that some one has deceived us, we feel offended. When we, therefore, tell a lie to our neighbor, we act against the principle of fraternal love laid down by Christ, and commit a sin.

2. Again, charity, nay, even justice, requires that we give to every one what belongs to him, and that we injure no one. But what do we do when we tell a lie? We injure our neighbor. The same applies not only to injurious, but also to jocose lies.

(*a.*) I need not say much concerning injurious lying, for the very term implies an injury inflicted. To such injurious lies belong all calumnies. What injury does not this kind of sin occasion? Example: Joseph of Egypt, whom the lying tongue of Putiphar's wife cast into prison. Susanna, who would have been stoned to death as an adulteress had not Daniel brought to light the base lies of the two aged sinners. St. Emmeran, who, in consequence of base calumny, was most cruelly martyred. What injury such sins cause in our days. How many lose their honor, good name, and the confidence of their neighbors, and are injured in their business, owing to calumniators. He who disseminates such iujurious lies cannot obtain forgiveness, unless he repair the injury as far as possible.

(*b.*) Nor is it any excuse for a lie because it is told to avert a danger from somebody, or to render him some service. Not only is such a lie a sin against God; it is even a sin against our neighbor. The only genuine love of our neighbor is that which arises from our love of God. The former is based upon the latter, and can not be separated from it. Love of God is the entire motive and reason for loving our neighbor. It were sheer folly then to say that the act of sinning against God, lying, could proceed from a love of our neighbor. Take away all love of God, and no true love of our neighbor will be left. In lessening the former by sin, you also lessen the latter. And in this way it may be truly said that in lying for your neighbor's sake you are actually sinning against the love of your neighbor.

But it not unfrequently happens that when we undertake to serve our neighbor by telling lies, it is with his knowledge, if not at his suggestion and instigation. He is thus made a partner with us in the sin, and therefore we injure him as regards his soul, and consequently sin against the love of our neighbor, which strictly forbids us to do an injury to his soul. This particularly concerns those who through a mistaken affection for another permit themselves to bear false witness, or even to take a false oath, in order to save him from punishment or to gain his lawsuit; it also concerns those mothers, brothers,

sisters, and servants, who encourage a child, brother, sister, or servant to lie. They who do this render themselves guilty of the sins of others, and those in whose favor they lie will return them little thanks for it in eternity.

(*c.*) *The lie of necessity*, so-called, is committed in order to extricate some one from a predicament. This also is against the love of our neighbor, which, though it does not command us always to reveal the truth to others, permits us in no case to tell a lie to deceive others. If duty does not require us to make known the truth, we may keep silence. In some cases we may even give an evasive answer. St. Thomas of Canterbury found himself, on account of his constancy in defending the rights of the Church, reduced to the necessity of fleeing from the direful revenge of Henry II. Disguised in the garb of a poor monk, and sitting upon a horse without bridle or saddle, he was met in his flight by a number of armed men sent by the king; they asked him whether he was the Archbishop of Canterbury. He smiled and said: "Judge for yourselves whether these are the garments of an Archbishop!" By this evasive answer he escaped from the hands of his enemies. You are allowed to give such evasive answers, when you are asked about things which you wish to keep secret: you are, however, never allowed to tell a lie, because it is always detestable and sinful. May parents remember this, and never excuse in their children the so-called lie of necessity!

(*d.*) *A jocose lie* consists in telling an untruth for pastime, for the entertainment of one's self or others. If the lie be palpable, it is simply mere sport, but no lie, because it is not joined with deception. Such jests, however, although they cannot be considered as lies, are not to be commended. They belong to that class of idle words of which Jesus says that we must render an account on the Day of Judgment. Jocose lies, properly so called, are also against the love of our neighbor, because we thereby deceive him, and deception is never allowed; or because we disedify others, lead them to levity, and thus, more or less, endanger their salvation; this certainly offends against the love of our neighbor. Guard yourselves, therefore, against jocose lies, for they are frequently not without sin, but deserve, unless repented of, the punishment of purgatory.

Part III.

Our own welfare.

1. *Our temporal welfare.* Nothing makes a man more amiable than open, frank behavior, sincerity, and love of truth. Every-

body who knows such a person honors and esteems him; every one puts confidence in him. We say, this is a truthful man, a Nathanael, in whom there is no guile; he neither deceives nor simulates, you can depend upon him, his word is as good as his bond and seal. His business is flourishing, every one deals with him, because it is well known that he deceives nobody. If he be an artisan, a day laborer, or a servant, he finds employment everywhere; every one helps him in need, for one can depend on his word.

Just the reverse is the case with men who are known to be liars. People say, this man is a liar, you can not trust him, you must always watch him, or he will lie and deceive you. No one esteems such a man, and every one tries to have as little as possible to do with him. A liar injures his own honor, his business, and his temporal welfare. If, therefore, you are concerned about your temporal well-being, love the truth, hate and detest lies and falsehoods.

2. *Our eternal salvation.* God sees his image in a sincere. truthful heart; therefore be inclined to it with a particular love, "Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? Or who shall rest in thy holy hill? He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice; he that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue."—*Ps.* 14: 1-3. How friendly and condescending was Christ to the open, straightforward Nathanael: "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and he saith of him: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."—*John* 1: 47.

On the other hand, God hates no one so much as a liar, for he sees in his heart the likeness of his arch-enemy, the devil, the father of lies. "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity, all that speak a lie; the bloody and deceitful man the Lord will abhor." —*Ps.* 5: 7. How severely Jesus reprimanded the false, hypocritical Pharisees. Many times he pronounced woe against them, and threatened them with eternal perdition.—*Matt.* 23: 13, *etc.*, *Luke* 11: 42 *etc.* The liar incurs God's displeasure and punishment. If, by a lie, considerable injury or loss is caused to individuals, to a family, a community, a church, or to society in general, it is a mortal sin, and will be punished with eternal damnation. Lies which cause little or no damage are venial sins, and must be atoned for in purgatory. Many seem to think those falsehoods from which no harm ensues are not sinful; this is an error, for every lie is at least a venial sin. Whosoever, therefore, for whatever cause, deviates from the truth commits a sin, and, if he does not do penance for it here, will be punished hereafter.

Therefore the liar not only injures his temporal prospects, but also risks his eternal salvation.

PERORATION.

I conclude with the admonition of St. Paul: "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak ye the truth, every man with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."—*Ephes.* 4: 25. Yes, the will of God, love of our neighbor, and our temporal and eternal welfare require that we put away lying, and in all cases speak the truth. Be sincere and truthful, like John. Affirm what is to be affirmed, deny what is to be denied, that you may find grace before Jesus Christ, who is "the faithful and true witness."—*Apoc.* 3: 14. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

Epistle. *I. Cor.* 4: 1-5. Brethren: Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God. Here now it is required among the dispensers, that a man be found faithful. But to me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day: but neither do I judge my own self. For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore, judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise from God.

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1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WHAT WE ARE, AND HOW WE ARE TO BEHAVE TOWARDS OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

The contents of the epistle of this day, properly speaking, refer to the Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests, They are the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the graces of God; that is, they are called by Christ himself and commissioned to announce to men his divine doctrine, and to administer

to them the means of salvation. Like the good servant and steward, they must be faithful; this is their first and principal duty; in all their labors they must have in view, not themselves, their honor and temporal interests, but God's honor, their own salvation, and that of others. They are, whilst conscientiously fulfilling their duties, to walk in humility and the fear of God, and, regardless of the frowns or smiles of the world, in the discharge of their ecclesiastical functions so to comport themselves that before the judgment-seat of God they may be found good and faithful servants. What is said here of the Apostles and their successors, applies equally to all Christians. With this understanding let us make a short meditation on to-day's epistle. We may divide it into four points, for it tells us—

I. What we are;
II. What are our special duties;
III. How we are to behave towards ourselves, and
IV. Towards others.

PART I.

What are we?

Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.

1. The Apostle says with justice: *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ.* We entered into the service of Christ at our baptism; there we renounced the devil with all his works and all his pomps, and promised to adhere to Jesus Christ, and to serve him as long as we live. And have we not every reason to serve him, for is he not a good Master? The burden which he imposes upon us, as he himself says, is light: "My yoke is sweet, and my burden light."—*Matt.* 11:30. And St John says: "His commandments are not heavy."—*I. John* 5:3. What appears arduous becomes light by grace. And for this easy service he does not promise us an earthly and perishable reward, but heaven, with all its unfathomable, everlasting joys. "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."—*Matt.* 5:12. Oh, who would not serve God with joy? And yet there are so many Christians who do not serve him. They are the slaves of their passions; of pride, covetousness, impurity, and of the devil: for "he that committeth sin is of the devil."—*I. John* 3:8. How unhappy are such Christians both in this world and in the next; here they have no peace of mind, only remorse of conscience, shame and misery of every description; and hereafter endless torments. O sinners! be not so blind as to serve the devil; enter the service of Christ, especially during Advent, this holy season

of penance. Christian parents, say frequently to your children and to those under your charge: "I and my house shall serve the Lord."

2. *And the dispensers of the mysteries of God.* These mysteries are the Christian doctrine and all the means of grace. Not only priests, but also every Christian, in his own way, is to dispense these mysteries.

(*a.*) *To himself.* Be zealous in hearing the word of God, which is preached to you every Sunday and holiday; love to read spiritual books; sanctify Sundays and holidays by assisting at mass and vespers; say daily your morning and evening prayers, and go frequently to confession and communion. By doing so you will dispense the mysteries of God to yourself.

(*b.*) *To others.* Be solicitous for the salvation of others; teach them, admonish them, warn them, give them good example, and pray for them. You can do a great deal of good and save many a soul. For parents, it is a duty of their state to be dispensers of the mysteries of God to those of their household. St Augustine says: "As we priests and pastors of souls must speak to you in our churches, so you, parents, must speak in your houses, that you may be able to give an account of your children."

Part II.

What are our particular duties?

Here now it is required among the dispensers, that a man be found faithful. Faithfulness is the chief duty of a servant and a steward. Since we are ministers of Christ and dispensers or stewards of the mysteries of God, we owe faithfulness to Christ. Wherein does this consist?

1. *In not appropriating to ourselves the property of God.* A faithful servant is conscientious, does not touch the property of his master, nor appropriate to himself the least thing that is not his own; he is, so to say, honest to a penny. Now, all that we possess and call our own is the property of God. *All natural gifts*, as our body with its senses, our soul with her faculties, are the property of God, because they come from him. *All supernatural gifts*, as virtue, sanctifying grace, the holy sacraments, the merits of Christ, are God's property. Fidelity requires that we ascribe all that we have and use to the unmerited grace of God. We must not pride ourselves on anything that we possess, but confess with the Apostle: "By the grace of God, I am what I am."—*I. Cor.* 15:10.

If, therefore, you shonld pride yourself on your land or houses, understanding or skill, beauty of body, or virtue and piety, you would not be faithful to Christ, because you would appropriate to yourself what is his. Be humble, and in all things give the glory to God.

2. *In laboring diligently in the service of Christ.* Every faithful servant does this; he works continually and diligently, as if he were laboring for himself. It is true, our Lord derives no advantage from our serving him faithfully; he does not need our service; but we need it, because thereon depends our salvation. No master is satisfied with a servant who does things in a slipshod fashion, carelessly, and only partially, who idles away his time, and takes a whole day to do what could be done in an hour. In like manner, Jesus is not satisfied with us if we are indolent in his service. "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully (carelessly).—*Jer.* 48: 10. The parable of the unprofitable servant.—*Matt.* 25: 24-30. We are so lukewarm in the service of Christ! We neglect so much good, which we could and should do, or do it so imperfectly; we pray with so many distractions, have so little fervor in receiving the sacraments, so little patience in our daily labor. How necessary, therefore, is the renewal of our fervor in the service of Christ!

3. *In serving God with perseverance.* A faithful servant does not run off before the expiration of his term, as it is to be feared so many male and female servants do in our day; no, he serves his master till the stipulated time has expired. Our term in the service of Christ extends not to one year only, but to our whole lifetime. In the calendar of Christ there is no holiday marked, all days are week-days or working-days. You must never rest, never feast, but always work, always serve. Many a one will think this a long, hard service. *A long service?* How? Is not the rest which follows infinitely longer? does is not last for ever? *A hard service?* To serve Christ—is it not to reign? And is not the reward for this service the everlasting, inexpressible felicity of heaven? How much you trouble yourselves all your lifetime about temporal things, which are so insignificant, changeable, and perishable; and will you not exert yourselves to gain heaven?

PART III.

How we are to behave towards ourselves.

But to me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day: but neither do I judge myself. For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified, but he that

judgeth me is the Lord. In other words: I shall serve God with all fidelity, and in doing this I am quite indifferent as to how people judge me; neither do I judge myself, lest self-love deceive me into thinking myself just. For although I do not know that I am guilty of any infidelity, yet I am not on that account justified; God, the Omniscient, alone can judge. St. Paul gives us here a double lesson, which teaches us how we are to behave towards ourselves.

1. We must say and do what we conscientiously think right, without regard to frowns or smiles, without regard to the judgment and opinion of persons. Whether the world praise or censure us, we must not act contrary to the will of God. If we do wrong in the sight of God it will profit us nothing, even if the whole world should praise and applaud us; for wrong is wrong, and will always remain so, even if it should be commended as the greatest virtue. Many a one, who in the eyes of the world is great and renowned, is in the sight of God a depraved, worthless man, and will burn for ever in the abyss of hell. On the contrary, many whom the world despises, reviles, calumniates, and persecutes, are great in the eyes of God, and shall one day shine like the sun in his kingdom. Examples: Herod on the throne, St. John in prison. Times have not changed in this respect; it is so to-day. Let us be constant in doing our duty, and never for the sake of the world become faithless to our religion and to the duties of our state. He who accomodates himself to the world shall perish with the world. "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."—*Gal.* 1: 10. Our maxim ought to be: "Trust in God and do what is right."

2. *We must not confide too much in our own justice, but leave to God the judgment thereof.* It is Catholic doctrine that, without a special revelation, no one can feel certain that he is just, and in the state of grace. If our conscience do not reproach us we may be tranquil and confidently hope with moral certainty that we are of the number of the just; but perfect and absolute certainty of it we have not. For no one has the positive assurance that he has never commited a mortal sin, or that he has made sufficient satisfaction for his past sins, and received forgiveness of them. This uncertainty, however, must not make us despondent or uneasy, but should guard us against presumption, keep alive in us zeal for virtue, and preserve us in humility. He who loves God, guarding himself even against small faults and conscientiously fulfilling his duties, may confidently hope that he is just and will be saved. "If our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God.—*I. John* 3: 21.

PART IV.

How we are to behave towards others.

Therefore, judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise from God. If we can not form a true opinion of ourselves though we look into our own heart, much less can we judge others justly. We must, therefore, leave the judgment of others to God, who on the Day of Judgment will manifest everything and render to every one according to his works.

(*a.*) Are we *never* allowed to judge our neighbor? Yes, we are. We may and must judge those actions of men which are open and manifest. If a person prays devoutly, maintains good discipline in his household, gives alms cheerfully—these are good works, which we must recognize and judge as such. But if it be generally known that a person lives unchastely, gets drunk frequently, scoffs at holy persons and holy things, reviles the Church and her ministers, these are manifestly bad actions, of which we evidently can not form a good opinion. We must never call good evil, nor evil good. We are not, therefore, forbidden to judge exterior actions, for thereby we violate neither truth, justice, nor charity.

(*b.*) The Apostle forbids us to judge *of what is unknown to us in our neighbor*, as his intentions, his motives, and his interior; for here no reliable opinion can be formed, because we lack the necessary knowledge. We can judge of the exterior action, but not of the interior motive, whether and how far it is good or bad before God. If we should form a judgment as to the interior merit or demerit of an action, we should judge rashly and usurp God's rights. And because appearances frequently deceive, we must be very prudent in our judgments, and always think well of our neighbor until we are fully convinced that we have good reason to think otherwise. Therefore, judge not rashly nor uncharitably, nor with exaggerated severity.

PERORATION.

The epistle of this day contains, as you perceive, very important lessons. Observe them. Serve your Lord and Redeemer with unchangeable fidelity, and avail yourself of the means of grace for the salvation of your soul. Never accommodate yourself to the maxims and judgments of the world, for it is steeped

in wickedness. Live in such a manner that God may be pleased with you, and be not deterred from his service by the praise or censure of the world. Do not trust too much in your own justice, nor pride yourself on the good you do: be humble and labor incessantly for your justification and sanctification. Do not meddle with the affairs of others, and beware of judging them rashly and uncharitably; leave judgment to God, the Judge of the living and the dead, who will render to every one according to his works. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

Gospel. *Luke* 3: 1-6. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip his brother tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilina, under the high-priests Annas and Caiphas: the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins: as it is written in the book of the sayings of Isaias the prophet: A voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled: and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

HOW WE ARE TO PREPARE OURSELVES FOR CHRISTMAS.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord.—Luke 3: 4.

St. Luke the Evangelist mentions exactly the time when St. John the Baptist was called to prepare the Jews for the coming of our divine Saviour; he names Tiberius, the Roman emperor, Pilate the governor, the princes in the land of Judea, and the two high-priests Annas and Caiphas. Why so? To indicate that, according to the predictions of the prophets, especially of Jacob the patriarch, the time for the coming of the Messias was at hand; for the Jews had no longer a ruler of their own, but were under

the dominion of the Roman emperor, who ruled the land through a governor, who appointed and deposed the high-priests. Jesus, whom John announced, was already in his twenty-eighth year; he, therefore, made his appearance at the time when according to the prophets the Redeemer was to come.

John preached the baptism of penance for the remission of sin; that is, all those who were earnestly resolved to do penance were baptized by him with water to signify that true repentance cleanses from all stains of sin, as water cleanses from all exterior defilement. Like the Jews, we must also prepare for the coming of Jesus, that he may bring us grace and salvation. The gospel of to-day tells us how we are to do this, in these words:

I. Every valley shall be filled;
II. Every mountain and hill shall be brought low;
III. The crooked shall be made straight, and
IV. The rough ways plain.

PART I.

Every valley shall be filled.

By valleys which are to be filled, we understand *worldly mindedness* and *timidity*.

1. *Worldly-mindedness. In what does it consist?*

(*a.*) In too great a solicitude for temporal goods, instead of those which are eternal, and a resulting carelessnes in regard to things pertaining to our eternal salvation. People of this description study only how to acquire money and property, to be honored and esteemed by men, and to enjoy the good things of this world, while they neglect their soul entirely, and seldom or never think of eternity. They spend their lives in earthly cares, in diversions and distractions, forgetful of their salvation, and if ever a wholesome thought arise in their heart, they banish it as an intruder that comes to disturb their peace. This worldly-mindedness is now-a-days prevalent in town and country, and among all classes of persons.

(*b.*) It is diametrically opposed to the spirit of Christianity. "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever; the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can not receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him."—*John* 14: 15-16. "You can not serve God and mammon."—*Matt.* 6: 24. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice." *Matt.* 6: 33. "Love not the world, nor the things which are in

the world; if any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him."—*I. John* 2: 15. Jesus sought nothing earthly, no honor, no money, no convenience, no pleasure; his whole ambition was to do the will of his Father. St. Paul says: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."—*Gal.* 6: 14. The Venerable Vincent Carafa, of the Society of Jesus, used to say that if he had a wish upon earth, it would be to have a little cell, a piece of bread, and a spiritual book, in order to occupy himself with God and his salvation, far away from the world and its turmoil.

You also must cultivate this disposition. According to the Apostle (*I. Cor.* 7: 31): "You must use this world as if you used it not;" that is, you must look upon everything that the world offers as a secondary thing, and use is only so far as it is subordinate to, or at least does not hinder you from obtaining, your final end. If you notice in your heart an inordinate inclination to any earthly thing, root it out.

2. Timidity.

The timid man views everything he has to do for his salvation through a glass which magnifies molehills into mountains. He knows he ought to keep the commandments, fulfil the duties of his state, practice the Christian virtues; but he says: *I can not.* He knows he ought to avoid the proximate occasions of sin, bridle his passions, fight against and subdue self-love, give up bad habits: but he says: *I can not.* He knows he ought to become reconciled with his enemy, restore ill-gotten goods, set his conscience in order by a general confession; but he says: *I can not.* Timdity is the cause of his leading a worldly and sinful life. He resembles the rich youth who, when Jesus told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor and follow him, became disheartened and "went away sad".—*Matt.* 19: 21, 22.

We must fill the valley of timidity; for, although with our natural strength we are not able to secure our salvation, yet we can, with the aid of divine grace, walk in that way, narrow though it be. "I can do all things in him who strengthened me."—*Phil.* 4: 13. The Saints were weak and inclined to evil, like ourselves; they had the same obstacles and temptations to overcome as we have—perhaps greater; but with the grace of God they surmounted all, and secured their eternal destiny. They were composed of the same flesh and blood as we, but they had a stronger will, more faith and courage than we have. If we have but the good will, and ask God for his grace, we shall live holily and be happy in heaven. Away, then, with all timidity and cowardice; let us put our hands to the plough with courage and confidence, and we shall experience to our joy and comfort that God does

not require of us too great a sacrifice, nor permit us to be tempted above our strength.

PART II.

Every mountain and hill shall be brought low.

By mountains and hills that shall be brought low we are to understand *pride, self-conceit, ambition,* and *all cognate vices.*

1. These vices do not permit faith, the first requisite for salvation, to thrive. We have a proof of this in the Scribes and Pharisees, who did not believe in Jesus, though he proved his divinity and dignity as the Messias by the sanctity of his life and the number of his miracles. Their unbounded pride caused them to act contrary to their better knowledge, and to continue in unbelief. And who are those now-a-days who are the enemies of the Church? The proud, who are captivated by themselves, and who, forsooth, know everything better than the Church, which is governed and directed by the Holy Ghost, and which has an experience of eighteen hundred years and more. Humility is required for faith, for faith is a grace which God gives only to the humble.—*James* 4: 6. Therefore Jesus says: "The poor (that is, the humble) have the Gospel preached to them."—*Matt.* 11: 5.

2. The proud man disdains to hear of penance and conversion, thinks himself already just, and feels not the necessity of doing penance. If any one try to convince him of the necessity of conversion, he is offended and rejects with indignation all admonitions, like the Scribes and Pharisees, who reviled, blasphemed, and hated Jesus, because he reproached them for their vices and exhorted them to do penance. Proud Christians act in like manner. If the priest in the pulpit or confessional touch sharply upon their sins, they boil over with wrath and indignation, call him a man devoid of good manners, a blind zealot, a disturber of the peace, and instead of amending their lives become more hardened. Justly, therefore, a spiritual writer says: "The proud man is incorrigible; he never errs or makes a mistake; therefore he is angry and spurns every correction." He is like a man, who has an ulcer, which you dare not touch even with the tip of your finger, or he will scream.

How necessary then it is that the mountains of pride be brought low and that you become profoundly humble! Only humble souls are accessible to divine grace; they alone do what is necessary for salvation. God is well pleased with them, and gives them the grace to work out their salvation.

Part III.

The crooked shall be made straight.

1. The crooked that shall be made straight is, *duplicity*, *hypocrisy*, *dissimulation*. Many who are infected with these vices appear outwardly as if they were the best and most sincere people in the world; but their heart is corrupted, and whoever trusts them will be deceived. These are the people who make golden promises, but do not fulfil them; who abuse the confidence placed in them and deceive every one who has anything to do with them; who make pretensions to religion and virtue, who praise their neighbor to his face, but ridicule and slander him in his absence; who simulate great joy at the good fortune of others, but really are vexed and envious thereat, rejoicing secretly when a misfortune befalls them. Duplicity is a universal vice, and with justice an old poet says: "If duplicity would burn like fire, wood would not be half so dear as it is."

2. And yet it is certain that there is scarcely a vice that stands in more direct contradiction to Christian virtue than this vice of duplicity. After the love of God, our chief law is the love of our neighbor.—*John* 13: 15. But wherein does it consist? In wishing well to all, sharing their prosperity and misfortune, and doing good to them wherever and whenever we can. Thus St. Paul describes the love of our neighbor.—*I. Cor.* 13: 4-6. Now, duplicity is in direct opposition to this love, wherefore Christ threatens it with eternal woe.—*Matt.* 23: 13-29. As we read in the gospels, our Saviour showed himself always full of love and compassion towards the greatest sinners, but we do not find a single example of his mercy shown to hypocrites and deceivers. He left them to perish.

Part IV.

The rough ways shall be made plain.

1. Uneven, rough ways symbolize men who easily get into a passion, are of a morose nature, and have frequent contentions with their neighbor, and in the heat of their passion say and do many things which they afterwards regret.

We must put aside this rough, boisterous, and irritable disposition, and earnestly strive to become conformable to our meek Jesus. What meekness did he not show—

(*a.*) *Towards his disciples*, who sometimes gave him great trouble on account of their indocility and other faults;

(*b.*) *Towards the people*, who so continuously, and often at the most inopportune times, sought his help and annoyed him with their importunity;

(*c.*) *Towards Judas*, his betrayer, whose feet he washed, and whom he did not rebuke or expose, but still treated with the greatest kindness;

(*d.*) *Towards his enemies*, even his murderers, for whom he prayed on the cross.

2. Jesus requires us to be meek. "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart."—*Matt.* 11: 29. He reproved his disciples with severity for their boisterous, revengeful anger, when on a certain occasion they asked him to call down fire from heaven upon a city of the Samaritans. "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save."—*Luke* 9: 54-56. He also declared to the Jews that every one who is angry with his brother (without a just cause and without Christian love), shall be guilty of the judgment.

According to the example and teaching of Jesus, we must overcome all irritable, passionate, and boisterous motions, and study meekness interiorly and exteriorly. To this end we must every morning make a firm resolution not to give way to anger during the day; and as often as we feel emotions of anger arise in our heart we must renew our resolution and ask Jesus for the gift of meekness; and lastly, we must impose some small penance on ourselves as often as we fail to keep our resolution. Only by continual practice and repeated contests will it be possible for us with the grace of God to become meek.

PERORATION.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Fill the valleys of worldly-mindedness and timidity, labor with courage and confidence to secure your salvation: seek the things that are above, and serve God with fervor and constancy. Bring low the mountains and hills of pride and ambition, and become humble of heart; for it is only the humble who please God and receive his grace here and eternal life hereafter. Make straight what is crooked by putting away all duplicity and hypocrisy, and cherish kind feelings towards every one. Make the rough ways plain by curbing the passion of anger, and "put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty,

patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another; even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also."—*Col.* 3: 12, 13. Herein consists the true preparation for the feast of Christmas, when Jesus will come with his grace into our hearts. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

JESUS CHRIST IS TRULY GOD.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.—Luke 3: 4.

The time when the promised Redeemer should appear upon earth had at length arrived. John had already, by the command of God, come forth from the desert to prepare the way for the Saviour. He preached the baptism of penance unto the remission of sins, which required all to do penance and be converted to the Lord from their hearts: only by so doing could the coming of the Redeemer bring them salvation. But who is this Redeemer? It is Jesus Christ, whom John represented to the Jews to be not only man, but also true God, proclaiming Christ's eternity and declaring himself unworthy to loose the latchet of his shoe. —*John* 1: 27. But the majority of the Jews would not believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God; they looked upon him as an impostor, rejected, persecuted, and finally crucified him. In our days there are many, even among those calling themselves Christians, who deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and call him merely the Wise Man of Nazareth. To strengthen your faith in the Divinity of Christ, and help you to defend it against Free-thinkers and unbelievers, I shall answer the following question: How do we know that Jesus Christ is truly God? We know this—

I. From the testimony of Jesus Christ himself;
II. From the testimony of Jews and Christians.

PART I.

Jesus Christ gave testimony that he is true God, and confirmed his testimony by his miracles and death.

1. "I and the Father are one."—*John* 10: 30. If Christ is one with his Father, that is, if he has with him one and the same

divine nature, he must necessarily be God. The Jews understood these words of Christ in this sense, wherefore they called him a blasphemer.—*John* 10: 33. "Amen, amen I say unto you: what things soever the Father doth, these the Son also doth in like manner."—*John* 5: 19. "For as the Father raised up the dead and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom he will, that all men may honor the Son, as they honor the Father."—*John* 5: 21-23. Here Christ affirms that he is true God, because whatsoever the Father does, he does also; as the Father raises the dead to life, so does he; therefore, the same divine honor is likewise due to him as to the Father. When Peter said to Jesus: "Thou art the Son of the living God," Christ called him blessed, and declared that he had received this knowledge, not of himself, but by divine inspiration.—*Matt.* 16: 13, *et seq.* In like manner he confirmed the faith of Thomas, who fell down before him and exclaimed: "My Lord and my God."—*John* 20: 28. Thus Jesus himself gives testimony of his Divinity in the most emphatic manner. Does his testimony deserve credit? It does most assuredly, for to doubt it would be to say that Christ was either a lunatic, or as the Jews had it, a blasphemer. Who can, without shuddering, think this of Christ? He was, as even the Jews and infidels admit, the greatest man that ever lived, and his life was so holy that his bitterest enemies could not convict him of sin. His testimony, therefore, is most credible.

2. Jesus confirmed his testimony by miracles. He changed water into wine (*John* 2); calmed the winds and the waves by a simple word (*Matt.* 8); fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes (*Matt.* 14); healed the sick of all kinds of diseases (*Matt.* 15: 30, 31); cast out devils (*Matt.* 8); raised the dead to life, and finally, raised himself from the dead. That these miracles surpass the powers of nature no one can deny; therefore they are works of divine omnipotence. There is, moreover, not the least doubt that Jesus really performed the miracles related of him in the gospel. He performed them publicly in the presence of friends and enemies; he appeals to these miracles, and no one dares to contradict him; the high council at Jerusalem even publicly acknowledges the wonders of Jesus in these words: "What do we, for this man doth many miracles?"—*John* 11: 47. What do these miracles prove? The Divinity of Jesus Christ; for every true miracle is a work of God, therefore, a testimony of God. God himself gives testimony by the miracles which men perform that he speaks the truth, for he can never work a miracle in confirmation of an untruth. Suppose somebody were to say: "I am Michael the Archangel," and to prove his assertion were to raise a dead man to life, we should be bound to believe him, and to say: "God has confirmed your word by a miracle; we can

doubt no longer." Now, since Jesus Christ has confirmed his testimony as to his being the eternal Son of God, one by nature with the Father, by stupendous and undeniable miracles, can any one in his senses dispute the truth of that testimony? Indeed, to deny that the miracles of Christ conclusively prove his Divinity would be to blaspheme the Creator. It would be equivalent to alleging that the Creator himself has woefully deceived his own creatures. For if, after all these miracles, Christ be not God, then to the Creator himself must be imputed the crime of which countless multitudes of men have been guilty for the last eighteen hundred years, namely, that of adoring as God one who is not such—the debasing and degrading crime of idolatry.

As Christ performed all miracles in his own name and by his own power he proves thereby his Divinity, because God alone can perform miracles. All those, too, which the Apostles and the faithful of all times wrought, are evidences of the Divinity of Christ, because they were all performed in the name of Jesus.—*Acts* 3: 1-16.

Lastly, Jesus sealed his testimony by his death on the cross. When the high-priest adjured him to say whether he was Christ, the Son of God, he solemnly affirmed and confessed, in the face of death, that he *was* the Redeemer and God himself, and that he would come again to judge the living and the dead.—*Matt.* 26: 63, 64. Hearing this testimony, the high-priest rent his garment to express his indignation, and all who were present declared Jesus to be a blasphemer guilty of death. Now I ask: If Christ were not God, would he, knowing that the penalty was death, have told so base a lie as to declare himself God? Would he not rather, if he had before falsely declared himself to be God, have retracted in order to escape death? Certainly; the terror of death, the fear of judgment, the love of life—all would have compelled him to negative the question of the high-priest, if he could have done so with truth. But as after his assertion that he was the Son of God, he quietly and composedly faced sufferings and death, it would be the greatest folly to doubt, even for a moment, his Divinity. Moreover, whilst he was hanging on the cross, wonders followed upon wonders. The sun was darkened, the earth trembled, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the graves were opened, and the dead arose; all attesting heaven's wrath and indignation at the lawful deed, the unexampled crime of the Jewish people, deicide. How could God, if Christ had falsely declared himself to be his divine Son, have wrought these miracles? And lastly, if Jesus were not the Son of God, how could God have visited the Jews with the terrible punishments which Christ predicted would fall upon them? Jesus Christ, therefore, is true God; his own testimony, which he confirmed

by numberless miracles and sealed with his death, compels us to believe it.

PART II.

It is also evident from the testimony of both *Jews and Christians* that Christ is true God.

The Jews.

The prophets of the Jewish people frequently call Christ, the promised Redeemer, God. David said of him: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. . . . Thou hast loved justice, and hatedstiniquity: therefore, God, thy God (the Father), hath annointed thee with the oil of gladness."—*Ps.* 44: 7, 8. Isaias says: "A CHILD IS BORN to us, and a son is given to us; and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."—*Is.* 9: 6, 7. Again, "God himself will come, and will save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free." —35. 4, 5. Jeremias: "In those days shall Juda be saved, and Israel shall dwell confidently; and this is the name that they shall call him: The Lord our Just One."—23: 6. By the word "Lord" we understand "Jehovah," for this is the word used in the original Hebrew, a name given exclusively to God. Lastly, John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God; behold him who taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said: After me there cometh a man who is preferred before me, because he was before me . . . And I saw, and I gave testimony, that this is the *Son of God.*"—*John* 1: 29-34.

The Christians.

(*a.*) The *Apostles* most emphatically give testimony of the *Divinity of Christ.* They call him "*God.*" St. John, who wrote his whole gospel in defense of the Divinity of his Master against the heresy of Ebion and Cerinthus, almost startles us in the very first line with those sublime words: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." St. Paul ascribes *divine perfections* to Jesus, saying; "For in him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by him, and in him; and he is before all (*i. e.*, before all creatures from eternity), and by him all things consist."—*Col.* 1: 16, 17. Lastly, the Apostles claim for Jesus that divine adoration which is due to God

alone. St. Paul says: "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."—*Phil.* 2: 10, 11.

(*b.*) *The Church.* The Catholic Church from the very beginning has held the belief that Jesus Christ is true God as the principal and fundamental doctrine of Christianity, and defended it against all the attacks of infidels and heretics at the beginning of the fourth century, when the impious Arius denied the Divinity of Christ, all Christendom arose in holy indignation against him, and condemned his heresy in the Council of Nice, A. D. 325.

The *Gentiles* testify that the Christians from the beginning believed in the Divinity of Christ. "Thus Pliny, governor of Bythynia, in a letter to the Emperor Trajan, towards the close of the first century, says: "The Christians assemble on certain days, in the morning, to offer to Christ as God a song of praise." The pagan Lucian ridicules the Christians because they adore a crucified man as God.

Millions of Christians have shed their hearts' blood for their faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and God has by numberless miracles glorified this faith, not only in the Apostolic, but also in subsequent ages. In the year 484 Hunneric, king of the Vandals, attempted to obtrude upon the Christians in Lipasa, a city in Africa, an Arian bishop who denied the Divinity of Christ. Because they would not acknowledge the heretical bishop, the king became so enraged that he ordered their right hands to be cut off and their tongues to be torn out by the roots; but behold, those whose tongues had been torn out spoke after the mutilation as fluently as before. A deaf and dumb man, who before could only stammer a few inarticulate, unintelligible words, received the gift of speech and praised God with a loud voice. The truth of this miracle is corroborated by the most trustworthy witnesses. Thus a pagan philosopher, Æneas, who in the year 533 had met many of those Christians at Constantinople, says: "I have seen them with these eyes, and have heard them speak, and I was astonished that their voices could be so perfect and that they could articulate so distinctly. And because I did not believe my ears, I took my eyes as witnesses; I made them open their mouth for me, and I saw that their tongues were torn out by the root. What astonished me most was that they could live." Even the Emperor Justinian mentions this wonder in one of his imperial edicts and confesses that he himself saw and heard two of these Christians speak without tongues.

PERORATION.

Jesus Christ is true God. Cling to this fundamental truth of ourholy religion and never allow yourselves to waver in your faith on account of the words and writings of infidels. Behold the apostles and the millions of martyrs, who, for their belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, sacrificed all they had in the world, even life itself; promise God that in this faith you will live and die. It is the first and most necessary requisite for salvation: "He that believeth in the Son hath life everlasting, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."—*John* 3: 36. Observe always what Jesus has taught by word and example, and lead a pure, pious life, for this is the best means of preserving the faith and of becoming strong in it, as Jesus himself says: "If any man will do the will of him (that sent me) he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—*John* 7: 17.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH FOR ADVENT.

All flesh shall see the salvation of God.—Luke 3: 6.

Among the persons mentioned in this day's gospel we find both Jews and Gentiles. The Roman Emperor Tiberius, and Pontius Pilate, his governor, were pagans; the Princes Herod, Philip, Lysanias, and the high-priests Annas and Caiphas professed, at least nominally, the Jewish religion. Many commentators on the Sacred Scriptures see indicated in this circumstance the consoling truth that Jesus Christ came not only for the redemption of the Jews, but also for that of the Gentiles. God wills the salvation of all mankind; therefore Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of all. But in order to become sharers in the fruits of the Redemption, it is necessary to do penance; therefore John appeared among the Jews immediately before the coming of the Redeemer and exhorted them to penance. It is in this spirit that the Church has ordained a similar preparation for the advent or coming of

Christ, and set apart the four weeks preceding Christmas as a time of penance; for she is aware that without penance and conversion we, Christians though we be, can no more obtain grace and salvation than could the impenitent Jews. Only by bringing forth fruit worthy of penance shall we see the salvation of God.

To encourage us to do penance, the Church has made several ordinances for Advent, of which I shall speak to you to-day. They are—

I. The prohibition to celebrate marriages solemnly;
II. Fast days;
III. Ember-week;
IV. The Vigil of Christmas Day.

PART I.

The prohibition to celebrate marriages solemnly.

The laws of the Church forbid us to celebrate marriages solemnly during the season of Advent, as well as in Lent. By solemn marriages we understand such as are celebrated with worldly pomp, public entertainments, music and dancing, and with the nuptial mass and its blessing. The prohibition to solemnize such marriages existed even in the primitive Church, and was inculcated anew at the Council of Trent—*Sess.* 24, *cap.* 10. Besides solemn marriages, worldly enjoyments, banquets, and balls are prohibited. The reason is apparent. Advent is a time of penance, which worldly amusements and pleasures ill befit. How could we indulge in sensual and frivolous enjoyments at a time when we are to consider the great misery which sin has brought upon us, and prepare ourselves by wholesome exercises of penance for Christmas? It is, therefore, highly reprehensible for Christians to continue these worldly pleasures and diversions and to frequent places of amusement during Advent the same as they would at any other time. They thereby prove and give others to understand that they comprehend very little of the mysteries of Advent, and not unfrequently give scandal.

The season of Advent should be to you not a time of levity or of sensual enjoyments, but of solitude, interior recollection, and penance. Avoid all distraction and enjoyments which are not suitable for this holy season, and deny yourselves sometimes even a lawful pleasure, in order to atone for your sins and to prepare yourselves the better for the holy feast of our Lord's Nativity.

PART II.

Fast days.

Advent is a time of penance; for this reason, the Church from the beginning prescribed a fast for this season. The synod of Macon, in the year 582, commands the faithful to fast from St. Martin's feast till the feast of the Nativity of our Lord, three times a week, on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Pope Leo IV. (847—855) and Nicholas I. (858—867) call Advent a time when all the faithful must fast. Many ascetic Orders still keep this fast partially or entirely. Pope Benedict XIV. thus alludes to it: "The Regular Orders now fast and abstain during Advent." The only traces left us of this ancient practice of fasting during Advent are the Ember days, (in some places the other Fridays; in some the other Wednesdays and Fridays) and Christmas Eve. The Church has, however, introduced many things in her divine office to remind us that this season is not one of feasting and festivities, but rather of prayer and penance. We are reminded of this at every turn. Marriage is forbidden to be celebrated solemnly, and both the mass and the divine office are shorn of many of their expressions of joy. In the office of this season the soul-stirring *Te Deum* is omitted, and in the mass there is no *Gloria in Excelsis*, no *Ite, missa est.* The organ is silent, the color of the vestments is the penitential one, violet; the ferial prayers are said on bended knees, and many other things are done to keep before our minds the nature of the season.

This fast in Advent reminds us of the sin of our first parents, who by eating the forbidden fruit brought ruin upon the whole human race. To avert the terrible consequences of this sin, and to render ourselves worthy of the grace of Redemption, we ought to mortify our sensual desires, especially the cravings of the appetite.

PART III.

Ember-week.

You know that each quarter of the year has a week that is called Ember-week. The third week in Advent is one of these weeks. Why is this? Advent is a holy season, during which we should meditate in a special manner on the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, and consider the infinite love of God, who in his mercy sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem us. Moreover, we should do penance for our sins, and strive to offer some atonement to the divine justice for the offenses we have committed against it; we should devote ourselves to fervent prayer, and

ask of God the graces which we need for our salvation. All these exercises so appropriate to Advent are prescribed for each of the Ember-weeks. It is the wish of the Church that during Ember-week we occupy ourselves with pious meditations on religious truths, especially the mystery of the Incarnation; that we fast on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and perform penitential works; and that on all days, but especially on the Sunday of the Ember-week, we excite ourselves to greater fervor than at other times of the year. Thus the Church during Ember-week gives us the best means for the sanctification of Advent.

She does the same during the week in her celebration of the liturgy. On Wednesday she endeavors to awaken in us especially a longing for the Redeemer. The Introit of the mass reads; "Drop down dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the just one; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour." In the collect we pray our divine Redeemer to come, and not delay, that we may be raised and comforted. On Friday the Church wishes to remind us of the salvation which the Redeemer is about to bring, in order to awaken in us a greater longing for him. With this view that portion of the gospel was selected for the mass which relates that Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, and that John, still in his mother's womb, was, by divine interposition, made aware of the presence of Jesus, leaped for joy thereat, and received the grace of sanctification. On Saturday the Church admonishes us to prepare the way for the Saviour by penance; wherefore she cries out to us in the words of Isaias the prophet: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." The object of Ember-week, then, is to awaken in us a desire for the Redeemer and a spirit of penance, that we may prepare ourselves properly for the feast of Christmas and become partakers of the grace of Redemption.

Part IV.

The Vigil of Christmas Day.

The primitive Christians celebrated the days before great feasts by fasting and watching, that is, remaining in prayer and meditation either all night or at least a portion of the night, or by devotional exercises either in the church or at home. They did this to prepare themselves the better for the feast on the following day. From these watchings the days preceding the feasts came to be known as Vigils, or night watchings. At present we have only a few Vigils proper, and among them is the Vigil of Christmas Day or Christmas Eve. St. Augustine long ago mentioned this Eve as a fast day. When at a later period many of the Vigils, or nightly assemblies, were abolished on account of abuses, the Church

excepted and retained the Vigil of Christmas Day, that the hour at which Jesus Christ came into the world might not pass without prayer and thanksgiving

Christmas Eve is a fast day, as are some other Vigils. This Vigil naturally directs our mind to the great mystery of the following day, reminding us that the birth of our Redeemer is very near at hand. The Introit of the mass consists of the words of Moses to the children of Israel when he prepared them for the legislation on Mount Sinai: "To-day you shall know that the Lord will come to redeem you, and to-morrow you shall see his glory." In the prayer we are reminded of the merciful coming of Christ, and because of this mercy encouraged to look forward to his second advent with confidence. The lesson treats of the Incarnation of Jesus and of the inexhaustible fountain of grace which this mystery opens for us. In the gospel an angel informs Joseph in a dream that the fruit conceived by Mary was of the Holy Ghost, and that he should call the Son whom she would bring forth, Jesus, because he would redeem his people from their sins.—*Matt.* 1: 18-21.

On Christmas Eve you should vividly represent to your mind the great and ever-memorable day which sealed the Old Law and began the New; that day on which Mary and Joseph, after having looked in vain for a lodging at Bethlehem, sought refuge in a stable, there to spend the night; that day on which the Fathers of the Old Law intoned canticles of joy and thanksgiving in limbo, because after thousands of years the hour had at length arrived when the *Expected of Nations* should be born; that day on which the heavenly choirs mingled their songs of jubilee with those on earth, when the angels prepared to descend in dazzling array upon the plains of Bethlehem to adore the new-born Saviour and bring the happy tidings of his birth to the pious shepherds, It is indeed a day of grace, a day which should be spent in holy recollection and devotion.

In some Catholic Almanacs you will find inserted on this day the names of Adam and Eve, our first parents. How significant! To-day Adam, to-morrow Christ; to-day Adam, the progenitor of the old human-race; to-morrow Christ, the progenitor of the new; to-day Adam, who by his disobedience brought death and ruin upon the whole human family; to-morrow Christ, who by his obedience redeemed the whole human race from the bonds of sin and death, and obtained for it grace and salvation.

Thus Adam and Christ stand in close proximity, and remind us of the words of the Apostle: "As by the offense of one, unto all men to condemnation; so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life. For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just."—*Rom.* 5: 18, 19.

PERORATION.

You know now the ordinances of the Church for Advent. Observe them. The days of Advent are not days of worldly distraction, but of holy recollection; not of sensual enjoyments, but of interior and exterior mortifications. During this time lead as far as possible a secluded life, and devote your leisure hours to prayer. Keep not only the prescribed fast days, but practice also voluntary penitential works, in order to atone for your sins. Show your love and gratitude to Christ by good works, especially works of mercy to the poor. Above all, I would advise you in Advent, or during the Christmas holidays, to receive the Sacraments of Penance and the holy Eucharist. By a good confession you should free your soul and conscience from every stain of sin, and prepare the way for your Saviour; and by a worthy communion you should receive him really into your heart and become partakers of all the graces of the great festival of Jesus Christ's Nativity. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

HOW WE ARE TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR CHRIST.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord.—Luke 3: 4.

In olden times there were but few ways or roads, and those few were often in a bad condition. When a prince undertook a journey to visit his subjects, it was customary to repair the roads by grading the elevations and filling up the valleys, thus making the crooked and rough ways, so far as possible, straight and plain. Soon, not a temporal but a heavenly king, Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, will visit us; for in a few days we shall celebrate the feast of his Nativity. But that he may come with his grace into our hearts we must prepare the way for him. Hence the admonition in the gospel of this day: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." But how are we to prepare the way for Christ? The answer is contained in this same gospel: *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain.* Let us make a short meditation on this.

PART I.

Every valley shall be filled.

By this is meant deep hollows, pits, which must be filled up, that a road may be made over them. This is exemplified in the construction of railroads. Between us and Christ there are, as it were, various valleys that must be filled, in order that we may prepare a way for him into our hearts. What are these valleys? I shall mention only three.

1. *The valley of unbelief.* Alas! this is a deep gorge, a horrible pit, which must necessarily be filled if Christ is to come to us. Where there is unbelief, Christ is far away; there no grace is to be found, only sin and eternal ruin. "He that believeth not shall be condemned."—*Mark* 16: 16. Example: The incredulous Jews, of whom Jesus says: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned: but now they have no excuse for their sin."—*John* 15: 22.

You, brethren, are happily not called upon to fill this valley of unbelief, for you all believe what our divine Saviour has taught and what the holy Catholic Church proposes to our faith. But there are two things of which you must not lose sight. First, there are many infidels and Free-thinkers abroad, who endeavor by word and writings to tear the faith from your hearts. Be not led astray by them. Shun their company, and do not read their books or newspapers. Secondly, live according to the precepts of faith; for it is only a living faith that leads to Christ and to eternal salvation. "If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."—*I. Cor.* 13: 2.

2. *The valley of distrust.* Many Christians are always doubting whether God has pardoned their sins and whether they will be saved. If they pray when in any difficulty, and their petitions are not immediately answered, they lose courage, and say; It is useless to pray; God does not hear me. This is a want of confidence in God, a valley that must be filled if Christ is to come to us. A man feels offended when he sees himself distrusted: how much more must God feel offended when we have so little trust in him? To mistrust God is to question his omnipotence, goodness, and veracity. Therefore St. James says: "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind; therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."—*James* 1: 6, 7. Example: Moses and the Israelites

in the desert, on account of their distrust in God, were punished by him.

Be firm in your confidence in God. You may surely hope to be saved if you do what is required of you. It is impossible for any one who has a good will and bravely coöperates with the grace of God to be lost. Even in our temporal affairs God will not forsake us; even these he will so order that nothing shall be wanting which is needful or useful for our salvation. "We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good." *Rom.* 8: 28, and "He that trusteth in the Lord shall be healed." —*Prov.* 28: 25.

3. *The valley of the love of the world.* Those who love the world have no love for God; their whole aim and study is to obtain temporal goods, honors, dignities, riches, and the gratification of their passions. They care little or nothing for their soul or for heavenly goods; they are active, vigilant, and busy in temporal things, but not in the service of God; they neglect the duties of religion, and transgress the laws of God and of his Church. How can he be pleased with them, how can he visit them with his grace? "Love not the world, nor those things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him."—*I. John* 2: 15.

This valley must be filled. Love God above all things, and manifest this love by preferring him and his holy will above everything earthly, and by avoiding all that is displeasing to him. Seek and desire what is temporal only in so far as it is necessary for this present life, and as a means of doing good and obtaining life everlasting. Take the words of St. Paul for your rule of conduct: "It remaineth (now) that they also who have wives, be as if they had none: and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not; for the fashion of this world passeth away."—*I. Cor.* 1: 29-31.

Part II.

Every mountain and hill shall be brought low.

Mountains and hills, especially if they be steep, are not very well adapted for roads; they must be either graded or tunneled. There are also, so to speak, mountains and hills in the heart of man, which must be brought low, in order that Christ may enter. Such mountains and hills are—

1. *Pride.* This is an inordinate esteem of one's self. Many boast of their knowledge and skill, their riches, fine clothes, beauty, virtue, and piety. This is pride. Many on every occasion speak of what is to their credit, esteeming themselves above others and looking down on them. This is pride. Many humble themselves apparently, call themselves frail, sinful men, but only in order to be praised. This is pride.

We must lower the mountains and hills of pride, otherwise Christ will not come to us. "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."— *Matt.* 18: 3. It is very laborious and tedious to level hills and mountains; in like manner the extirpation of pride is difficult, for it is an inheritance received from mother Eve, and a vice deeply rooted in the human heart. The first thing necessary is to ascertain its existence. To this end let us frequently ask ourselves: Do I always seek God's honor? Do I not feel hurt when I am slighted or despised? Do I not love to speak of what is to my credit? Do I not desire the praise of men? Do I not think myself better than others? Let us, moreover, avail ourselves of the proper means for acquiring the virtue of humility, such as the consideration of the terrible consequences of pride, the necessity of humility, the examples of Christ and the saints, and our own misery and frailty.

2. *Avarice.* Gold and silver are dug out of the hills and mountains, and frequently become mountains again in the heart of man, for the avaricious heap up gold and silver in vast quantities, and yet never have enough. They resemble a man with the dropsy, whose thirst only becomes greater the more he drinks. Jesus does not climb over such mountains of avarice; whenever he meets with one in his way, he turns aside and walks on the level ground. How could he, who calls the poor in spirit blessed, and denounces the rich, and who, although rich, chose poverty for his portion, and lived and died poor,—how, I ask, could he come to a man whose god is Mammon, and who, in order to acquire riches, frequently violates justice and charity, neglects the duties of religion, and labors, not for heaven, but for earth? Let such a one meditate on Dives and Lazarus.—*Luke* 16. Mountains and hills are leveled by removing rocks, grading down the unnecessary earth, and filling up the hollows with it. In like manner, the mountains and hills of avarice must be brought low; give of your superabundance to the poor. Thus the Apostle wills it: "In this present time let your abundance supply their want, that their abundance also may supply your want, and that there may be an equality, as it is written: He that had much, had nothing over; and he that had little, had

no want."—*II. Cor.* 8: 14, 15. Works of mercy obtain for us God's grace and mercy. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."—*Matt.* 5: 7.

Part III.

The crooked shall be made straight.

People do not like roundabout roads and whenever they can they avoid them by taking short cuts which bring them sooner to their journey's end. Our divine Saviour also does not like crookedness; on the straight road he comes to us or not at all. What are these crooked ways which we must make straight? They are the *crookedness of insincerity*—

1. *Towards God.* To this crookedness belong all actions which tend not towards God, but towards something else, to which, therefore, a good intention is wanting. You work, not because God wills it, but for the sake of your temporal progress, you attend church frequently, not to worship God, but to be considered a good Christian; you give alms, not because it is the will of God, but to receive human praise; you guard against impurity and drunkenness, not because God forbids these vices, but because they render a man contemptible and lead to disgrace and penury. The Scribes and Pharisees followed these crooked ways in performing their good works; wherefore Christ says of them: "They have received their reward."—*Matt.* 6: 2. Do not take these crooked paths, but follow the straight road, and heed the advice of the Apostle: "Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men."—*Col.* 3: 23. Form the good intention every morning of doing all things for the honor and glory of God, and renew this intention from time to time during the day, not only with your lips, but also by the upraising of your heart and mind to your Father in heaven.

2. *Insincerity towards our neighbor.* That man has crooked ways in his heart who does not cherish a kindly feeling towards his neighbor, who dissimulates, deceives and cheats him in business transactions, or assumes the appearance of piety in order to impose on him more easily. To such a one the words of the royal Psalmist apply: "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity, thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie."—*Ps.* 5: 7. Alas! how many tread these crooked paths! Let us, brethren, go the straight way of sincerity and honesty, saying with David: "I know, my God, that thou provest hearts and lovest simplicity." —*I. Paral.* 29: 17.

3. *Insincerity towards one's self.* It seems paradoxical to say that one could be insincere towards one's self. But it is frequently the case, and this insincerity is one of the crooked ways that must be made straight before Christ will come into our souls. And how are people insincere towards themselves? Brethren, if you think a pious, God-fearing life consists only in external exercises, without troubling yourself about your interior, or without watching and subduing your inordinate desires and inclinations; if you think that it is enough for salvation to avoid evil, and that you may neglect the good, especially the duties of your state of life; if you believe that God, on account of your ordinarily good life, will be indulgent as regards this or that sin,—in so many points you are insincere towards yourselves, for you have been taught and know better. These are so many crooked ways that must be made straight before your Saviour can come into your hearts. Reflect whether you have not heretofore followed these crooked ways, and if you have, make straight what is crooked and regulate your life according to the precepts of the gospel.

PART IV.

The rough ways shall be made plain.

It is not easy to proceed on rough, stony roads; some are altogether impassable, and if these are to be gone over they must be first made plain by removing the ruggedness, breaking the stones, and making the uneven surface even. Every one enjoys traveling on a good, smooth road, and such a road Christ also demands for his coming into our souls. Many Christians are, like these rough ways I have spoken of, rough in their conduct—

1. *Towards God.* These are they who are not satisfied with the dispensations of divine Providence, but impatiently murmur and complain, for instance, of bad weather, of the bitterness of their lot, of sickness, or some temporal mischance. This is very wrong; it is encroaching on the prerogatives of God, who alone has the right to ordain and to do as he pleases; it is murmuring against his Providence, which governs and guides all things, good as well as evil, according to his wisdom; it is a repining that one can not get to heaven by some other way than the one which Jesus pointed out by word and example—the way of the cross. Make plain what is rough; submit cheerfully and unconditionally to the dispensations and ordinances of God, according to the example of Job and the saints, repeating fervently on each trying occasion: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

2. *Towards our neighbor.* Boisterous, irritable natures are rough. When things do not turn out as they wish, they are enraged; a contradiction puts them in a passion; when they do not succeed with their work they begin to curse and blaspheme; when corrected, they are indignant and offended, and complain of being wronged. *Towards superiors*, if they are not treated with the greatest consideration, they are rude; *with their equals* they get into contentions and difficulties; *to their inferiors* they hardly ever speak a friendly word. It is hard to live with such people. "It is better to dwell in a wilderness than with a quarrelsome and passionate woman."—*Prov.* 21: 19.

What is rough must be made plain. "Let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation and clamor, and blasphemy, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ."—*Ephes.* 4: 31, 32. But this requires effort. Therefore, daily resolutions, frequent prayer, and continual practice are necessary.

PERORATION.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Fill the valleys of unbelief and distrust, stand firm in the Catholic faith and in confidence in God in every situation of life. Bring low the mountains and hills of pride and avarice, make straight what is crooked: do all for the honor of God; be kind to every one, regulate your life according to the precepts of the divine law, make plain what is rough, submit to the will of God, and be patient and meek towards your fellow-men, especially towards your inferiors. Blessed will you be if you thus prepare the way of the Lord, for you shall see the salvation of God. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE SMALL NUMBER OF TRUE PENITENTS.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.—Luke 3: 4.

The preaching of penance by St. John the Baptist on the banks of the river Jordan made a deep impression upon his hearers. Filled with consternation they came to him and asked what they should do in order to escape the judgments of God. What a consolation it would be to us pastors of souls, if Christians would come to us with such fervor to hear the word of God, and manifest such anxiety to do penance for their sins! Truly this would greatly lighten the difficult office of preaching. This consolation, however, is rarely accorded us. Many will not even hear us, and the majority of those who do listen, give slight heed and have no intention of putting what they hear into practice. A hundred sermons will scarcely convert a single sinner. Of vices and sins we hear every day; there is an excess of them reported in the daily newspapers, but how seldom we hear of a wicked person being truly converted! The majority of sinners remain sinners, and are converted neither in life nor in death. Yes, the number of true penitents is very small—

I. When in health;
II. In the time of sickness.

PART I.

The number of true penitents is small when they are in health. To convince ourselves of this truth we need only consider—

1. *The effects of true repentance, and*
2. *Whether these effects are visible in our penitents.*

1. *True repentance* changes—

(*a.*) *The mind and disposition of a man.* His ideas of God, of the world, of virtue and sin, are quite different from those he had while in the state of sin. As a sinner, he cared little about God,

thought of him but seldom, and only accidentally; benefits and punishments made upon him either only a momentary impression or none at all. As a penitent he turns his eyes to God, reflects with a heart full of emotion and gratitude upon the benefits and graces he has received, and with terror upon the danger to which his salvation had been exposed; he never ceases to give thanks to God, who delivered him from this danger and received him so mercifully. When a sinner he valued and loved only what the world has to offer, honors, riches, and pleasures; as a penitent these things are to him mere playthings; his soul alone and eternal goods possess real value in his eyes. As a sinner he did not perceive the greatness and baseness of his iniquities; Christian virtues were a matter of indifference to him, or were even distasteful. As a penitent he is ashamed of his sins, is sorry for them, and rejoices in what is good and pleasing to God.

(*b.*) *The inclinations of a man.* I do not say that true repentance extirpates every inclination to sin, for a predominant inclination to evil remains even in the heart of the just man in consequence of original sin. But true repentance exterminates all voluntary desires for sin, makes us hate what we sinfully loved before conversion, and love those things which we then sinfully shunned or hated. This interior change is an absolutely necessary requisite for repentance. Penitents who still love what they loved as sinners, for instance, their sinful familiarity, or hate what they they hated as sinners, such as prayer, hearing the word of God, and mortification, are not penitents, but hypocrites.

(*c.*) *It changes our life.* It may happen that even true repentance is followed by a relapse into the old sin, for human weakness is so great, and the enemies of our salvation so powerful and numerous, that even Christians who are truly converted may in an unfortunate moment again sin grievously. Nevertheless, it remains a truth, that the repentance which is followed by a relapse, is either no true repentance, or only a very doubtful one. If Mary Magdalene, Zacheus and Paul, after having given fair promises of repentance, had continued their sinful life, we should say: These persons were not earnest in their repentance, else they would have changed their lives. In fact, where there is true repentance, a radical change of life is discernible, and, even if relapses do follow, they will be rare, and by and by will cease altogether.

2. *By the effects you may judge of the repentance of the majority of Christians and of your own.*

(*a*). Where are the penitents in whom we find these three great changes, viz., a change in the *disposition of mind, in the inclinations*, and *an amendment of life?* How many can you show me who have changed their views of God, the world, virtue and vice? How many can you point out who allow no inordinate desire to dwell in their hearts? How many can you name, who manifest a thorough change of life? If we see that the majority of Christians, after confession, are as lukewarm in the service of God as before, that they seek their former occasions of sin, continue their dangerous familiarity with persons of the opposite sex, and relapse into their former sins of drunkenness, neglecting mass, bad company, etc., what can any one think of their repentance but that it was a mere mockery of God, and that by a sacrilegious reception of the sacraments they brought upon themselves, not the blessing, but the curse and wrath of the Almighty?

(*b*.) And now tell me how matters stand with you. Have you begun to change the disposition of your mind? Do you hate and detest sin above everything, and from the bottom of your heart? Do you entertain no inordinate inclination in your heart? Are you zealous in the performance of your duties? Do you not relapse into your former sins? Do you avail yourself of the means of grace for repentance and the amendment of your life? Alas! I fear there are but few among us who can answer these aud similar questions affirmatively. And if this be the case, you may well feel uneasy concerning your repentance, for you can not reasonably hope that your salvation is secure. Hence St. Ambrose says: "It is easier to find Christians who have preserved the garb of baptismal innocence undefiled, than such as recover it after they have once lost it by sin." In other words, it is easier to find Christians who have never committed a mortal sin than Christians who, having grievously fallen, have truly repented. The number of true penitents, then, must be very small, since the number of those who preserve their baptismal innocence, who never commit a mortal sin, is comparatively small.

PART II.

True repentance among Christians in a good state of health is rare, but it is equally, and even more rare, in time of sickness. And why?

1. *On account of the severity of the judgments of God, which are very different from what people generally imagine them to be.* It is true, God is infinitely merciful: "His mercy is above all his works." But the sinner must not render himself entirely un-

worthy of the mercy of God by his obstinacy; he must not, as it were, compel God to withdraw his hand from him and to deliver him to perdition. But this is just what impious Christians usually do, for they continue to accumulate sin upon sin, and reject all the graces given them. God turns from them and abandons them to the perversity of their course. To such impenitents the words of the Lord apply: "Because I called and you refused: I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded; you have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions: I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared."—*Prov.* 1: 24-26. Example: Antiochus—*II. Mach.* 9. I do not, however, assert that God will accord no further graces to obstinate sinners, for in that case their conversion would be absolutely impossible, and whilst living they would already be of the number of the damned; but this much is certain, that God does not give to sinners of this description extraordinary, but only ordinary graces, by means of which they could be converted but in their blindness and obstinacy they will not be converted. They remain impenitent and are lost. He, therefore, who sins heedlessly, and is satisfied with thinking that after a while or on his death-bed he will set his conscience in order and do penance, exposes his salvation to the greatest danger, and has reason to fear that his place will be among the damned.

2. *On account of the critical circumstances by which penance is almost always accompanied in time of sickness.*

(*a.*) Sinners who have lived impenitently when in health usually postpone their conversion also when they are sick. They wait to see whether the medicine has the desired effect, or whether there is any hope of recovery. You must not mention to them that they should receive the last sacraments. They are afraid they might be obliged to break their bonds of sin too soon, and it seems as if they cried out to Christ, as the devil did: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"—*Matt.* 8: 29. They wait until the last hours of life, when their body and soul are so debilitated that they can scarcely set their temporal affairs in order, much less those of their soul. By the persuasion of pious friends, they will at last, when death stares them in the face, send for the priest and make their peace with God by a confession of their sins. But in order to make a good confession, true contrition with a firm purpose of amendment, as well as an entire confession of all our sins, and an earnest will to make satisfaction, are required. What kind of contrition is such a dying person's likely to be? Think you it will have the requisite qualities?— that it

will be interior, sovereign, supernatural, and universal? or only natural, partial, and extorted by fear? Or, in other words, will the sinner now all of a sudden change his whole disposition? will he, above all, hate and detest sin, which he loved all his lifetime? Do you suppose that he will now turn with true, genuine love to God, for whom in life he cared so little? Will he to whom a life of sin has become a habit, a second nature, have a firm purpose of amendment? Will he be able to confess all the sins which he committed during a long series of years, as also their number and necessary particulars? Will he firmly purpose to repair all the evil he did to the best of his ability? Ah! how much it is to be feared that whatever such a penitent does on his death-bed will be only an empty appearance, a sham penitence, a mockery. People sometimes say: "This one or that one had the priest in his last hours, received all the sacraments before his death, he died happy." But God in heaven speaks another language. The sinner died as he lived, unrepentant, and with all his sins upon his head was called to judgment. His was not the repentance which cleanseth from sin. It was but a spasm of human fear,—of the earth, earthy. His apparent reconciliation with his Maker was but a sham, or rather another fearful enormity in the sight of all heaven. People will say: "He prayed with the priest before he died, and broke out into contrite sighs." You must know the dying man could borrow from the priest the *words* of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, but not necessarily feel these divine virtues within him. As to the contrite sighs, who knows but they were more the result of bodily pains than of sorrow for his past sins? All those who suffer pain, sigh and moan, but how many do you think sigh and moan on account of their sins? But they say: He repeatedly and emphatically promised that he would lead a good life if he should recover. All dying people promise this, but if they recover, do they keep their promises? The majority do not! they commence their old life of sin, and fall still deeper into the mire of iniquity. Alas! these fair weather promises and protestations of repentance on the sick or death-bed, seldom proceed from a truly contrite, thoroughly changed heart, and are not reliable tokens of a true reconciliation with God by sincere repentance. No matter how such sinners may act in their sickness and on their death-bed, it is always doubtful whether they will be saved. We are, it is true, not allowed to judge; nevertheless, we have reason to fear on account of the uncertainty of their repentance.

PERORATION.

Do not postpone your repentance for a year, or for a week, much less till the end of your life. If you have the misfortune to

fall into mortal sin, at once make an act of contrition, and avail yourself of the first opportunity to restore yourself to a state of grace by a good confession. If any of you have lived in sin for several years, oh, let me entreat you to think of the danger you run, for you may die at any moment, and if you do live on longer, it is to be feared that you will never, not even on your death-bed, be reconciled with God by a true repentance. Remember what God says to every sinner: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day, for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee."—*Ecclus.* 5: 8, 9. Never forget that although there are many ways in which we are drawn into sin, there is only one way to get out of it, *penance*; and that the same God who tells us that there is no salvation *without faith*, tells us also that we shall be lost *without penance.*

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

WE HAVE MANY PREACHERS OF PENANCE, BUT FEW PENITENTS

John came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins.—Luke 3: 3.

We find St. John the Baptist to-day on the banks of the river Jordan as a preacher of penance. Great multitudes of people flocked to see and hear that extraordinary man. He preached with the power and zeal of an Elias, and threatened all with the judgments of God, unless they should bring forth fruit worthy of penance.—*Matt.* 3: 8. Besides penance, he preached baptism as the beginning and dedication of a new and better life, and as an illustration of the necessity of the interior purification from sin. To give more emphasis to his words, he led a most austere, penitential life himself. "He wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey."—*Matt.* 3: 4. Such a preacher of penance was St. John. Have we not also preachers of penance? Yes, brethren, we have; but, as in the days of John, so now-a-days, there are only a few who listen to them and bring forth fruit worthy of penance. Let us meditate on this truth to-day. We have—

I. Many preachers of penance, but
II. Few penitents.

PART I.

What preachers of penance have we? I shall mention only three: *our conscience, the Church,* and *God himself.*

1. *Our conscience.* God has given this preacher of penance to every man. Pagans, Jews, Christians, believers and unbelievers, hear its voice. If the sinner do not heed his conscience, but, contrary to its warning, do wrong, it cries out to him: Thou hast offended God and incurred his displeasure and punishment. It admonishes, entreats, and threatens him, repeating these admonitions and threats as long as the sinner perseveres in sin. He may endeavor to silence this interior monitor, but he can not succed; it raises its voice again like a restless child that will not be quieted until you do its will. It cries out to the young man and the young woman: Give up that dangerous familiarity; do not tempt God, but give it up at once, or shame and perdition, temporal and eternal, will be your portion. Conscience cries out to parents: Watch over your children with more solicitude, do not allow them to keep bad company, forbid them unseasonable hours, bring them up in the fear of God, for you must give an account of them and of all the sins which they commit in consequence of your neglect, carelessness, or bad example. It cries out to the drunkard, the gambler, the prodigal: Amend your life, or you shall perish eternally. To the unjust: Make restitution, cease cheating and overreaching, for the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God. To make its admonitions more impressive, it gives the sinner no rest, it torments him with remorse, and goads him on, as the drayman whips his horse to urge him forward. Thus conscience is a continual and powerful preacher of penance.

2. *The Church.* She preaches to us—

(*a.*) *By her priests.* What labor and pains do not pastors of souls take in their public discourses to bring sinners to a true knowledge of themselves, and to lead them to penance! They describe to them not only the *mercy of God,* which never rejects a repentant sinner, but also the *justice of God,* the misery of the sinner, and the happiness of the true penitent for time and eternity; they instruct them in what they must do in order to be reconciled with God, and show them the danger to which they expose themselves by putting off their conversion. And with what earnestness do not priests labor in the confessional to save

the sinner! With what zeal do they not speak to his heart, and how impressively do they not persuade him to relinquish his bad habits, to restrain his passions, to avoid the occasions of sin, and to make use of the means of grace to amend his life! Truly, no sinner will ever be able to excuse himself before God on the ground that priests have not often and emphatically preached penance to him.

(*b.*) *By her holy seasons and feasts.* Are not all the holy seasons and feasts of the Ecclesiastical year preachers of penance? The violet color of her vestments, the silence of the organ as well as the ceremonies of the Church during Advent and Lent, do they not all exhort us to do penance for our sins? The same may be said of the feasts of our Lord, of Mary, and of the saints. The feasts of our Lord present to us the mysteries of our Redemption and call upon us to apply to ourselves the fruits thereof by penance; the feasts of Mary present to us the Blessed Virgin as the Mother of grace and mercy, thereby infusing confidence into the heart of the sinner and encouraging him to have recourse to her; the feasts of the saints tell us; Behold, in heaven above a place is also prepared for you; but since nothing defiled can enter heaven, you must do penance and make use of your temporal life to obtain that which is eternal.

(*c.*) *By missions, jubilees, etc.* During missions the most terrifying truths are proposed for our consideration, such as the four last things, death, judgment, heaven, and hell, the necessity of penance, the consequences of sin, and the justice of God; these sermons make a salutary impression upon every one who has not lost all faith and is not entirely perverted. At the time of a jubilee and on days when indulgences are granted, as during the Forty Hours' devotion, the word of God is preached forcibly and eloquently; moreover, at such times, and on such days, great graces are given to sincere souls, and consequently extraordinary conversions frequently occur on these occasions.

3. *God himself.* He preaches to us—

(*a.*) *By particular events in life.* Such events are: A dangerous sickness which confines the sinner for weeks to a bed of pain and brings him to the brink of the grave; to many, such a sickness has been the most effectual means of spiritual recovery. The death of a father, of a mother, or a friend, not unfrequently makes a very wholesome impression upon frivolous, thoughtless, worldly people, for it preaches to them the uncertainty of human life, and turns their thoughts to eternity, and with eloquent silence cries to them: You also must die and appear before the

tribunal of God, perhaps sooner than you expect! Accidents, such as conflagrations, hail-storms, bad crops, etc., are means by which God, as it were, does violence to sinners in order to make them turn from their evil ways and be converted.

(*b.*) *By public calamities and sufferings.* As often as the Israelites fell into idolatry, or other sins and vices, God visited them with plagues. In the time of the high-priest Heli they suffered many defeats, and the Ark of the Covenant even fell into the hands of the Philistines. In the time of King Achab a three years' drouth visited the land, and the misery was so great that men and beasts starved.—*III. Kings* 17. When the Israelites, did penance God again showed them mercy and grace, and withheld his avenging arm. As such a preacher of penance God appears also in our days. What time has been so rife with calamities as ours? Have we not had bloody wars which brought ruin and sufferings of every kind upon countries and nations? Cholera, which in large cities swept away thousands of inhabitants? Do we not read of yellow fever, earthquakes, storms, and inundations which cause devastations and claim the holocaust of many human lives? Alas! how many men in our days live notwithstanding in entire forgetfulness of God? They respect neither human nor divine laws; they are deaf to all salutary admonitions, and for this reason God himself begins to preach; he wields the rod of chastisement, thereby to bring those who despise him to a sense of their duty. Thus, as you see, we have many preachers of penance, but few penitents.

PART II.

Yes, we have but few penitents; and why? Because many sinners persuade themselves *that they do not need penance;* many take *that to be penance which is not penance;* and many *put the matter off;* imagining that, in their particular case, there still remains plenty of time for penance.

1. *Many sinners believe that it is not necessary for them to do penance.* They are not murderers, robbers, drunkards, or adulterers; they commit no great, palpable sins and vices, and therefore believe that they are not among those who need do penance. Alas! how many, fancying this, deceive themselves! People talk thus who are eaten up by pride and vanity, who are given to envy, calumny, overreaching, and perhaps to sins against holy purity. Forsooth, they do nothing! Yet the gospel condemns many a one such as they. To all outward appearances they are without reproach and stand well in the sight of all men. But will they, in their heart of hearts, claim to be so in the sight of God? If

they would only look carefully into themselves, and faithfully compare their lives with the maxims and teachings of the gospel, I have no doubt that all of them would discover abundant reason why they should do penance. Did not the Scribes and Pharisees think themselves just? But they deceived themselves, for Christ emphatically declares: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 20. Many act as does a business man when he compares his assets with his liabilities; they make a comparison between their sins and their good works, and seeing that the number of their good works exceeds the number of their sins, they feel quite relieved and think it unnecessary to do penance. But this again is a self-delusion. Suppose you can count a thousand good works, and only one mortal sin, you have more than sufficient cause to do penance, for all your good works would in such case avail you nothing before God, and on account of that one mortal sin you would be eternally lost, unless you earnestly do penance. This is a doctrine of our faith.

2. *Many take that to be penance which is not penance.* They imagine that if they confess their sins, receive absolution, and perform the penance enjoined upon them by the confessor, all is right, that penance consists therein. Confession, absolution, and satisfaction are indeed necessary parts of penance, but they do not constitute true penance, such as is required for the forgiveness of sin, and for eternal salvation. First of all, *true, sincere contrition* is required. We must hate and detest all sins, especially mortal sins, because they are a grievous offense against God; we must be sorry because we have so often and so grievously offended him. But how many there are in whom it is to be feared this contrition is wanting. Their penance is not genuine, but counterfeit. *A firm purpose of amendment* is required. You must be resolved never again to commit mortal sin, and to avoid the occasions of sin; furthermore, your resolution must be so firm that you must be ready to die rather than offend God again by mortal sin. But how many pretended penitents there are who have no such intention of amending their lives, and can not resolve to avoid those persons, places, and pleasures that heretofore were to them proximate occasions of sin! Their penance is but sinful trifling. True penance requires us to restore ill-gotten goods, to repair any damage caused by our sins, to restore the honor and good name of our neighbor as far as we can, to be reconciled with our adversaries, to repair all injustices committed in our dealings with others and avoid them for the future, and to overcome all our bad habits. How many there are who do not do this! Their penance is not penance. Lastly, true penance requires that we avail ourselves of the means of

thorough conversion, such as prayer, the frequent thought of God, the bridling of our outward senses, the mortification of our sinful inclinations, the frequent reception of the sacraments; but how many there are who neglect these means! Their penance is but a sham. And with such penance many Christians quiet their consciences during their whole lifetime. Let us find out whether we ourselves do not belong to this class of penitents.

3. *Many imagine that it will be time enough long hence for them to think of doing penance.* Young people think: When we get married and commence housekeeping we shall change our life. A business man thinks: When I have accumulated enough to live on the interest of my money, and when I retire from business and have more time than now, I shall set my conscience in order. Aged people think: I shall live a few years more, perhaps ten or twenty; there is time enough to prepare for eternity. Thus all defer their conversion, thinking that they have still plenty of time. What a delusion!

(*a.*) *Who has time at his disposal?* No one. *Youth has it not;* young people may die, and every day do die. The gospel speaks of a young man of Naim and of a daughter of Jairus, who died in the bloom of youth. In one cold night the frost will blight the fairest buds and blossoms. How many young people there are in our cemeteries! *Mature age has it not.* The storm roots up and breaks down the most stately oaks. Lazarus died in the prime of life. History and every one's own experience prove that death does not spare people of middle age. Of those who are in their declining years, who are well past the meridian of live, having reached their threescore, or the threscore and ten of the Psalmist, of these I shall not speak at all. The years now granted them, or any that may be granted them in the future, are truly years of grace. How foolish then it is to say: "There is time enough yet," when you can not promise yourselves to-morrow. "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee."—*Luke* 12: 20.

(*b.*) *And time for penance, in particular, who has that at his disposal?* Is it probable that he who in his youth lies in sin will be converted in mature age? or that he who in mature age will not think of conversion will be converted in his declining years? It occurs but rarely. People generally remain during their whole life what they were in their youth; there are exceptions, but they are few and far between. The longer one lives in sin, the more sin becomes a habit, the more callous grows the conscience, the less becomes the fear of God, the deeper the spiritual blindness, and the harder the obduracy; and the consequence is that penance becomes more difficult and rare the longer it is deferred. The

words of Jesus aptly apply to sinners who defer their conversion from time to time: "With their ears they have been dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted."—*Matt.* 13: 15.

PERORATION.

Follow the admonition of the Psalmist: To-day if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts.—*Ps.* 94: 8. Whenever the voice may come which says, "Do penance," listen to it; it is the voice of God, who wills your salvation. Heed it, obey it, for he who now comes as a Redeemer will one day appear as a Judge. Hear it, for he, our Redeemer and Judge, has said: "Watch ye, therefore; because ye know not the day nor the hour."—*Matt.* 25: 13. And what if death should steal upon you unawares and find you unprepared! It will then be too late for you to fill your lamps. All who at the coming of our Lord are not purified by true repentance and reconciled with God must hear those terrible words: "I know you not."—*Matt.* 25: 12. Therefore do penance speedily, and save your immortal souls. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

EPISTLE. *Gal.* 4: 1-7. Brethren: As long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father: so we also, when we were children, were serving under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law; that he might redeem them who were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father. Therefore, now he is not a servant, but a son. And if a son, an heir also through God.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

MAN'S CONDITION BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST, AND WHAT HE HAS BECOME THROUGH CHRIST.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.—John 1: 14.

The Incarnation of Christ is the adorable mystery which we commemorate during these days. After Christmas the Church begins gradually to unfold this mystery more and more to our veneration, in order that we may the better understand its significance and learn to know the plentitude of its grace. Hence all the epistles and gospels up to the feast of Epiphany refer to Jesus, the new-born Saviour of the world, and render conspicuous those truths relating to his Divinity and humanity, to his office as Redeemer and Dispenser of grace, which faith proposes to us. So also the lesson of this Sunday, which is a small portion of the epistle addressed by St. Paul to the Galatians, and in which he explains to them—

I. The condition of man before Christ, and
II. What man became through Christ.

Part I.

As long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a servant though he be Lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father: so we also, when we were children, were serving under the elements of the world.

1. In order to represent to us the condition of the Jews and Gentiles before Christ, the Apostle refers us to the law regarding minors which existed among all ancient nations. He says in other words: From their birth children are the heirs of their fathers, but while under age they have no power or authority over the goods left them by their deceased parents. And although they are the proprietors, and real owners, yet they cannot dispose of these goods at their pleasure, but are under tutors or guardians, who direct the management of the hereditary estates until such time as their wards have attained their majority. During their minority these children in nowise differ from servants, because, like them, they are dependent upon others. It is only when they have attained their majority and are released from the guardianship of others, that they can dispose of their patrimony at will.

The Apostle means to say that the condition of man before the coming of Christ was analogous to that of children during their minority. Before Christ came they resembled minors under tutors and guardians, being under the Old Law like children under a guardian or a taskmaster. St. Paul had the Jews in his mind, for they inherited by birth the blessings which God had promised to their progenitor Abraham; they were the chosen people; out of their nation the Redeemer was to come forth; they were to be the first to be made partakers of the grace of Redemption. But just as minors are under tutors and guardians, so the Jews had a guardian, that is, the Law, with its stern precepts, to which they were subject until the appointed time, namely, until the Redeemer should come and abolish the Law. What St. Paul here says of the Jews applies equally to the Gentiles. They also were descendants of Adam and Eve, to whom God, immediately after the fall, promised a Redeemer, and although, in the course of time, they erred and fell into idolatry, yet God did not abandon them, but placed them under the natural law, and in various ways sought to prepare them for the coming of their Redeemer. Thus both Jews and Gentiles resembled children under age, who, although they were by God's grace and providence heirs of his goods, namely, justification and

sanctification, yet they could not fully possess these goods, with all the benefits that possession implies, until the time appointed by the Father for Jesus Christ to come into the world and accomplish the work of Redemption.

2. Let us admire here the *longanimity of God.* In the course of time men had sunk deeper and deeper into ignorance and vice; God, however, never abandoned them, but did all that was necessary and possible to save them. In like manner he still acts in his kind providence. So many thousands of his children heap sin upon sin, and for years despise every grace which he sends them from heaven; God has abundant reason to abandon them and to hand them over to perdition, but he is patient, and continues to give them grace after grace and call after call, that they may at last be converted and live. This longanimity is often crowned with the desired success; the sinner comes to the knowledge of his condition and does penance. Manasses, king of Juda (*IV. Kings* 21; *II. Paral.* 33.): the thief on the cross. Oh! that every sinner would avail himself of the longanimity of God!

3. Let usalso admire the *wisdom of God.* God led the Jews and Gentiles to salvation by entirely different ways. To the Jews he gave the written Law, with a multitude of precepts and ceremonies, by which he reminded them continually of their sins and the necessity of Redemption, and so held them in restraint. He also from time to time sent them prophets, who announced the coming of the Messias and exhorted them to penance. He allowed the Gentiles to go their own way; to try their natural strength and learn by sad experience the depth of the misery of sin. Only by considering the appalling moral degradation to which immortal man, made in the image and likeness of God, had sunk before the coming of Christ, and man's futile efforts to lift the cloud of ignorance which overspread the world,—man's futile efforts to ascertain something of the spiritual, whence or why he was, and what his future may be—can we have any conception of the Redemption. The greater portion of the world, Jews and Gentiles, were conscious of their misery and longed ardently for the promised Redeemer. By whatever ways God may lead us, whether we have prosperity or adversity in this life, he always has our welfare in view. Let us, therefore, be guided cheerfully by his wisdom and have confidence in him.

4. *The fidelity of God.* Four thousand years passed before the promise of God to send a Redeemer to sinful man was fulfilled; the time seemed long before its fulfilment, especially as the misery and corruption of morals daily became greater among

men. But when the interval of time appointed by God had elapsed, the Redeemer came. God's word never fails, whatever he promises or threatens will inevitably come to pass. An important truth this, of which we should never lose sight. As God is faithful, let us too be faithful. Let us keep the promises we make him, especially those made in confession. "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee."—*John* 5: 14.

Part II.

1. *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, that he might redeem them who were under the Law; that we might receive the adoption of sons.* The Apostle here says that Jesus Christ the Son of God came into the world at the time appointed by his heavenly Father, and assuming human nature in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, became man, in order to redeem us from sin and the bondage of the devil, and to raise us to the liberty and dignity of children of God. Through Christ we also have become children of God. He expiated our sins, reconciled us with God, and effected our adoption as children of our heavenly Father. For this reason the Apostle continues: "And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father." Now, since we are redeemed, we may look up to God with filial confidence and address him with joyful hearts as "Our Father who art in heaven."

What a grace! what a dignity! If a king were to adopt the child of a poor peasant, every one would call that child fortunate. Now, we have become through Jesus Christ children, not of a temporal king, but of God, the King of heaven and earth; our position, therefore, is imcomparably higher than that of a temporal prince. A person of royal birth must conduct himself in a manner corresponding to his dignity. He would be the object of universal contempt, if, unmindful of his extraction and prerogatives, he were to associate with traveling comedians or the lowest people of the city, and conduct himself like them. A prince is to be respected on account of his noble extraction, even if his conduct be not very commendable. Learn from this a double lesson: Respect yourselves, and never do anything that is contrary to your dignity as children of God. If low passions arise in you, or if any one try to induce you to do what is wrong, say to yourselves: I am a child of God, I should disgrace myself if I condescended to do such a thing. Secondly: Respect the dignity of children of God also in your fellow-men. Let a man be what he may, in whatever state of life or circumstances, poor, ignorant, or deformed, do not look down on him, for in him

you would despise a child of God. Beware of falling into this sin. God loves his own—loves the work of his hands too much to suffer it to go unpunished. And still more does he love, aye, infinitely more, those souls now redeemed and sanctified, the fruit of the Precious Blood of his well-beloved Son, Jesus.—*James* 2: 2-9. Do not despise even the greatest sinner; he also has been redeemed, and if at present he be not a child of God, he may sooner or later become one. The vocation to become a child of heaven is always his.

2. *Therefore now he is not a servant, but a son. And if a son, an heir also through God.* The Apostle intends to say: Being no longer under the discipline of the Old Law, or groaning in the service of the devil, we are no longer servants, but children of God, and as such have a right, title and claim to all the goods of God, our heavenly Father. Through Christ, then, we are heirs of God, our Father in heaven, as children are the heirs of their father. But what are the goods that we receive from God as our inheritance? They are principally three: *The forgiveness of our sins, grace to do good, and eternal salvation.*

(*a.*) *The forgiveness of sins.* Christ made a more than sufficient, a superabundant atonement for our sins, and through the merits of this atonement we can receive forgiveness from God. Therefore he is called the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world."—*John* 1: 29. This forgiveness extends to all sins, original as well as actual; all that is required on our part is that we be truly sorry for them and receive the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance. And yet there are so many Christians who will not comply with these easy conditions for the forgiveness of their sins! They continue to live in impenitence and expose themselves to the great danger of being eternally lost. Is this not deplorable blindness?

(*b.*) *Grace to do good.* We need the supernatural assistance of God to work out our salvation. If we wish to avoid evil, to overcome temptations, to perform works meriting eternal reward, to persevere in justice, we need the grace of God. This grace we can obtain only through the merits of Christ. Therefore, the Apostle says: "To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ."—*Ephes.* 4: 7. Hence also the admonition of the same Apostle: Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid."—*Heb.* 4: 16. To obtain the necessary grace to perform good and meritorious works, two things are required on our part: *Humble, fervent prayer, with confidence, and a good use of the graces received.*

(*c.*) *Eternal salvation.* The greatest and principal inheritance to which as children of God we have a claim, is *eternal beatitude in heaven.* This, too, is due to the merits of Jesus Christ. Hence, St. Paul says: "We have confidence in the entering into the Holies (heaven) by the blood of Christ, a new and living way which he hath dedicated for us."—*Heb.* 10: 19, 20. How much better off are we than those under the Mosaic Law, who, although just, could not enter heaven, but were detained in limbo, until the work of Redemption through Christ should be accomplished! A joyful hope is ours in life, and in death consolation, for we know that Jesus Christ has prepared for us a place in the mansions of eternal bliss.

PERORATION.

Let us look up, with a heart full of joy and gratitude, to our blessed Redeemer, and reflect on the great favors he has obtained for us by his sacred passion and death. We have become, through him, *children of God and heirs of heaven.* We can, therefore, pray with confidence: "Abba, Father." To him we owe everything, the forgiveness of our sins, the grace to do good, and our hope of eternal salvation. Oh, let us show ourselves worthy of these inestimable gifts, and live as children of God, that we may one day become co-heirs with Christ in his heavenly kingdom. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

GOSPEL. *Luke* 2: 33-40. At that time, Joseph, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were wondering at these things, which were spoken concerning him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother: Behold, this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was far advanced in years, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow until fourscore and four years; who departed not fom the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day. Now, she at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord, and spoke of him

to all that looked for the redemption of Israel. And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city. Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in him.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

SIMEON, ANNA, AND THE HOLY FAMILY.

The events related in this day's gospel, which is a continuation of the gospel for the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary or Candlemas-day, occurred in the temple at Jerusalem, forty days after the Nativity of our Lord. Mary and Joseph carried the divine Infant thither, to present him to the Lord, and thereby fulfil the Mosaic Law. Whilst Mary and Joseph with the Infant Jesus were in the temple, Simeon, led by the Spirit, came in also, and with a loud voice blessed God for having granted him the happiness of seeing with his own eyes the Saviour of the world. Anna, an aged widow, who was present, did the same. Let us then meditate on what the gospel of this day says—

I. Of Simeon;
II. Of Anna;
III. Of the Holy Family.

PART I.

Simeon.

1. *Simeon blessed them,* (Mary and Joseph), that is, he called them happy on account of the grace which God had shown them, and wished them every blessing. The priest's blessing has a particular power; esteem it properly, and obtain it as often as possible. Never leave the church until you have received the priest's blessing at the end of mass. Christian parents, bless your children daily, that the good and merciful God may protect them against all evil of soul and body. Bless them especially when they leave you or go abroad.

2. *This child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel.* This prophecy first of all applies to the Jews. Christ was set for the resurrection of those among the Jews who believed in him and lived according to his doctrine; through him they were saved; but he was set for the fall of those who would not believe in him, who hated and persecuted him, and finally nailed him to the cross; that is, they perished through their own fault, on account of their unbelief and obstinacy. This prophecy

also refers to all mankind. Christ is set for the ruin of unbelievers and heretics, to whom the Catholic faith is announced, but who do not receive it; for the fall of those who apostatize from the Church, as also for the fall of those who believe, but do not live as Catholics. He is set for the resurrection of those who keep the faith and live according to its precepts. Is he set for our fall, or for our resurrection? This depends entirely upon ourselves. He will be set for our resurrection, if we believe and live as Catholics should live.

3. *And for a sign which shall be contradicted.* This prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled even during the life of Christ on earth, for he met with contradiction at every turn. The wordly-minded Jews did not desire a Redeemer who would free them from sin and the slavery of the devil, but one who would deliver them from the Roman yoke; they did not desire a Messias who would preach to them poverty of spirit, self-denial, and hatred of the world, but one who would make them a powerful nation, and rich in worldly possessions. Christ came to do neither, and therefore they rejected him. And every day for the last eighteen hundred years has witnessed anew the fulfilment of that prophecy of the venerable Simeon: "This child is set for a sign which shall be contradicted." For from the day of Pentecost till our own the Church of which that Child is the head has never ceased to be in contradiction and at war with the world. First, the Church endured a fierce persecution lasting three hundred years; then came the struggle of unbelievers, heretics, and Freethinkers against the Church, which has continued through all ages, and is more bitter than ever in our days, when countless enemies, the precursors of Antichrist, fight against her orally and in their writings, and even by brute force endeavor to destroy her off the face of the earth. But let us not be discouraged. The Church will never be conquered. She is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell will not prevail against her. This Child, God-man, is with her; he is her strength, and whosoever wishes to be with him will stand firmly and bravely by the Church.

4. *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* A sword, not of iron, but of the deepest sorrow and unnutterable woe, was to pierce the soul of Mary. Ah, how must this holy Mother have suffered when she lost Jesus at Jerusalem; during his public life, when she saw that he received nothing but ingratitude, hatred, and persecution in return for all his benefits! What did she not suffer when she stood at the foot of the cross! Ah, Mary coöperated indeed in our Redemption. Thanks and praise to her for evermore! She, the most innocent, the Mother of God, bore her

maternal grief with the most perfect resignation, and what are we who so often complain of insignificant, trivial sufferings?

5. *That out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.* The meaning of these words of Simeon is: Thy sorrow, O Mary, for the passion and death of Jesus will reveal the interior of man and show whether he is for or against Christ. His passion and death was the touchstone of man's heart, proving its worth. The well-disposed and the humble adhered to Christ, while the proud and those who loved the world could not and would not comprehend the humble, poor, and mortified life of Jesus. They did not hear him. So it is to-day. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."—*Gal.* 6: 14.

PART II.

Anna.

1. *And there was a prophetess, called Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was far advanced in years, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow until fourscore and four years, who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day.*

Anna is called a prophetess because she had the gift of prophecy. We may admire this gift of hers, but should not desire it, because the gift of miracles and prophecy is not necessary for salvation; wherefore God gives it only to a few and for particular purposes. What we should not only admire in Anna but also imitate, is—

(*a.*) *The chastity of her state of life.* It is said of her that she entered into matrimony after her virginity. What a beautiful example to single persons. There are many unhappy marriages, because so many in their single state lead unchaste lives. How can God bless the marriages of people who when single led an impure life, and who married only for the gratification of their lust? Oh! that all young men and women would take Anna for their model and imitate her in her life of purity! It is, of course, to be supposed that Anna spent her married life in the fear of God and never violated her matrimonial chastity, for those who pass their single life virtuously, will also, when married, observe the chastity of that state. Oh, what will come to light on the great Day of Judgment, when the nuptial relations are unveiled! How many married men and women, full of shame and confusion, will cry out: "Ye mountains, fall upon us;

ye hills, cover us!" Christian married people, live piously, do nothing and permit nothing that is contrary to the chastity of your state, or that is abominable in the sight of God. If you have any doubts, ask for advice in the confessional.

Anna, who was still young, remained a widow, though her husband had died after seven years of their married life. There is no commandment to remain in widowhood; widowers and widows may marry again, but if circumstances do not render it necessary, it is better and more perfect not to do so. In widowhood, however, continence is a strict duty. "A widow that liveth in pleasures is dead whilst she is living."—*I. Tim.* 5: 6.

(*b.*) *Fasting and prayer.* She served (God) by fastings and prayers night and day. Fasting and prayer must be wholesome and pleasing exercises in the sight of God, because they are emphatically called a *service of God*, and she served God. Be not of those who pretend to be enlightened, and ridicule fasting and going to church. Observe the ecclesiastical precept of fasting; never eat meat on days of abstinence or on fast days; even if you be legitimately excused from observing the letter of the law you ought never to let them go by without practicing some measure of self-denial in the matter of food and drink. Reflect that Christ sanctified fasting by his example, and expressly declared: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. Cultivate a love of prayer. This love will come of persevering practice and the grace of God. The dumb animals do not pray because they do not know God; the evil spirits do not pray, because they are impious and godless in the true sense of the word. I know you do not wish to be either; therefore, pray. Aged persons, like Anna, who have time, should, if not hindered by distance or bodily infirmities, go to mass daily, and prepare themselves by fervent prayer for a good death. Old people who are not fond of prayer have no true idea of a spiritual life.

2. *Now, she at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord, and spoke of him to all that looked for the Redemption of Israel.*

(*a.*) *At the same hour.* Here you see how much depends upon making use of the right opportunity for salvation. If Anna had not come at that hour, when Mary and Joseph, with the Infant Jesus, were in the temple, she would have been deprived of the happiness of seeing the Saviour of the world. Never neglect an oppotunity of doing good. A confession, a sermon, a mortification, a good work, for which you have an opportunity, may be a special grace for you upon which your salvation may more or less depend.

(*b.*) *She spoke of him to all.* Anna was not satisfied with praising God herself for this grace; she revealed to others also the happiness which mankind had received by the birth of the long-expected Messias. He who is religiously inclined loves to encourage edifying discourses, and seeks to infuse into others a spirit of religion. Do not always speak of temporal, but sometimes also of spiritual things. Parents especially should frequently speak to their children of God and divine things, and instil into their youthful minds the fear and love of God.

(*c.*) *That looked for the Redemption of Israel.* She did not speak to every one, but only to pious persons, who like herself longed for the Messias. Prudence requires us to speak of religious things with such only as are themselves thereto inclined. If we be obliged in our particular state of life to associate with people who are known as enemies of religion and of Christianity, let us not enter into conversation or argument with them on the subject of religion, partly because it is useless, and partly because we might give them occasion to show their ill-will, or to ridicule and blaspheme what is most sacred to ourselves.

PART III.

The Holy Family.

1. *And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth.*

(*a.*) Mary and Joseph did not leave the temple till they had performed all that the law of Moses required. Oh, that all Christians would follow their example and perform their religious duties conscientiously! Many, especially young and giddy people of both sexes can not apparently wait for the end of mass on Sundays and holidays. Immediately after the communion of the priest they slip out of the church. This betrays lukewarmness and proves that they have little respect for the service of God. Such conduct is also a bad example; it gives scandal and disturbs others in their devotions. Christians who act thus will certainly not fare well before the tribunal of God, who says: "Cursed is he who does the work of God negligently." Parents should see to this and correct their children for leaving the church before mass or any other service is over, but this correction should be given with prudence and moderation. As far as may be practicable, parents should have their children kneeling by their side during mass and all devotional exercises in the church.

(*b.*) It is said of Mary and Joseph that, after they had performed all things according to the law of Moses, they returned home. As suggested by this remark of the Evangelist, I would here advert to the pernicious habits of some, who after attending mass on Sunday very seldom return home. While innocent recreations, and interchange of friendly visits between friends and neighbors, are by no means forbidden on Sunday afternoons or evenings, it is a sad fact that the very day of the week which we are commanded to keep holy, is, of all others, most profaned by backbiting, gambling, drinking, and bad company. Surely, this is not the way to keep the day holy, and those who return home from the church by such crooked ways can not hope to be on the straight road to heaven.

2. *And the child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in him.*

In these words the Evangelist gives testimony of the Humanity and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

(*a.*) Of his *Humanity*, for he says: *The child grew and waxed strong.* According to his Divinity he could not grow or wax strong, because God is immutable, and possesses every perfection in an infinite degree; but according to his human nature he grew and increased in strength, like all other men.

(*b.*) Of his *Divinity*, for he says: *The child was full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in him.*" It can not be said of an ordinary child, only forty days old, that it was full of wisdom, because its reason is yet dormant. Now, if the Infant Jesus was full of wisdom, it is evident that he was not a mere human child, but divine Wisdom itself; and that in him, as St. Paul says, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge existed. "The grace of God was in him" means that according to his divine nature he was infinitely holy, but that he manifested his sanctity more and more externally.

PERORATION.

May this testimony of the Evangelist strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ, and encourage us to imitate him, that by advancing in virtue we may approach nearer to him who is our last end. It being the last Sunday of the year, let us now examine ourselves and see how far we have done this heretofore. A glance at the past year will teach us that we have not yet become what, with the grace of God, we could and should be. Let us,

therefore, humble ourselves before God, and employ the few remaining days of this year for our sanctification; let us make a firm resolution to make good use of the years which God in his mercy may allot us and let us "perfect our sanctification in the fear of the Lord."—*II. Cor.* 7: 1.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH.

Without faith it is impossible to please God.—Heb. 11: 6.

The Infant Jesus is surrounded to-day by pious persons only. Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and Joseph, the foster-father of our Lord, were saints; so was the aged Simeon, to whom God granted the grace of beholding before his death the promised Redeemer; and Anna was a saint, who in her single life lived a virgin, in her married state walked in the fear of the Lord, and in her long life of widowhood served God in fastings and prayers night and day. We, too, should, become saints; this is our vocation: "You shall be holy for I am holy."—*I. Pet.* 1: 16. The portals of heaven are opened only to the holy. Now, as our vocation is to become holy, and as, according to the Apostle, faith is the foundation, the very first requisite for holiness, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (*I. Pet.* 1: 11), I shall speak this morning about the necessity of faith. For the sake of method in the discourse, and that you may the more readily follow the argument, I shall answer the three following questions.

I. Can we be saved without faith?
II. Can we be saved in any religion?
III. In which religion can we be saved?

PART I.

Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation.

1. *By reason of a commandment.* Jesus Christ has given the commandment to all mankind to believe in him, and has threatened with eternal damnation all who do not believe. "He that

believeth not shall be condemned."—*Mark* 16: 16. And again: "He that doth not believe is already judged."—*John* 3: 18. That is, he has judged and condemned himself; there is no necessity for God to judge and condemn him. Here, then, faith is made a strict precept. As he sins and incurs eternal damnation who wilfully transgresses a commandment in an important matter, so those who do not believe sin grievously and render themselves guilty of eternal damnation. If we were to violate no other commandment of God but this, and otherwise lead a good life, we should nevertheless be eternally lost. Yes, unbelief is of all sins the most grievous and most worthy of damnation. Jesus expressly declares this when he says to his Apostles: "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words (that is, receive the doctrine which you announce in my name), going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the Day of Judgment than for that city."—*Matt.* 10: 14, 15. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha had committed crimes that cried to heaven for vengeance, and yet their punishment in the next world will be less than the punishment of those who refuse to receive and believe the doctrine of Jesus. What judgment then will come upon those who fall away from the faith! May the Lord defend us from every sin, but particularly from the sin of unbelief! He who closes his heart against faith carries the brand of damnation on his forehead.

2. *Faith is absolutely necessary as a means of salvation.* That is, every person who has arrived at the age of reason, whether baptized or not, must believe in order to be saved. This is evident from the words of the Apostle: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him."—*Heb.* 11: 6. Here St. Paul places faith in juxtaposition with pleasing God, declaring that both are equally necessary for our salvation. Without pleasing God, or in other words, unless we are children of God, it is absolutely impossible to be saved: consequently, without faith it is absolutely impossible to attain eternal salvation.

That faith is a necessary means is evident from the fact that it enables us to perform supernatural works, by which we merit salvation. Heaven is a reward obtained only by good works. "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 12. "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor."—*I. Cor.* 3: 8. Everlasting life is not a natural, but a supernatural reward. From this it follows that the good works by which we merit salvation must be supernatural. The means must be proportioned to the end. We cannot quench

thirst with bread, nor appease hunger with water, because bread is not the proper means for quenching thirst, nor water for appeasing hunger. In like manner, the supernatural reward of heaven cannot be merited by purely natural works. Now, good works are supernatural only when performed in the state of grace, and this state presupposes faith, as the Apostle declares. Infidels may perform good works without number, they cannot merit the least reward in heaven, on account of their want of faith, because these works are only natural. In general, all justice that does not proceed from faith is without merit, for "the just man liveth by faith."—*Rom.* 1: 17. Therefore, Christ rejected the justice of the Scribes and Pharisees, and declared it insufficient to obtain heaven for them, because they did not believe in him. Hence, you see, it is absolutely impossible to be saved without faith.

PART II.

Can we be saved in any religion? No, we can be saved only in the religion which Jesus Christ has taught.

1. *The Word of God teaches us this.* If we could be saved in any religion, it would not have been necessary for Jesus Christ to preach and expound doctrines for three years under so many tribulations and persecutions. Both the Jews and the Gentiles already possessed a faith. The very fact therefore of Christ teaching and requiring most explicitly and emphatically faith in himself and in his doctrine, is of itself proof sufficient to show that the Redeemer never thought it a matter of indifference what faith one professes. Jews and Gentiles were required to abandon their tenets and receive the faith which he announced, if they wished to be saved. He said to his Apostles: "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned."—*Mark*, 16: 15, 16. If, according to the words of Christ, those only will be saved who receive the gospel with a believing heart, and those will be condemned who reject it, who would dare assert that man can be saved in any other religion whatsoever?

The Apostles acordingly insisted that the faith which they preached in the name of Jesus should be received in its entireness and held as the only faith by means of which salvation is possible. St. Paul writes to the Galatians: "I wonder that you are so soon removed from him who called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another, only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you beside that which

we have preached to you, let him be anathema."—*Gal.* 1: 6-8. And to his disciple Timothy he writes: "O Timothy keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding the profane novelties of words, and oppositions of knowledge falsely so called, which some promising, have erred concerning the faith."—*I. Tim.* 6: 20, 21. How earnest are the admonitions of the Apostle, how strictly he requires pastors and people to hold to the faith they had received and to avoid all innovations! Even the mild and loving John says: "If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him, God speed you: for he that saith to him, God speed you, communicateth with his wicked works."—*II. John* 1: 10, 11. If, according to St. John, we must avoid all communication with a person who wishes to propagate another doctrine than that of Christ, in order not to be seduced by him and suffer the loss of our own soul, who could be so foolish as to believe that one can be saved in any other faith than that which Christ taught?

(*a.*) *Reason teaches us the same.* If we could be saved by every faith, we should have to admit *that God is pleased with every faith.* It would therefore be all the same to God whether we believe his Son Jesus Christ to be God or a mere man; whether we give divine honor to the Blessed Sacrament or not, whether we revile it, and even trample it under foot; or whether, as the heathens did, we adore the devil; in short, it would be a matter of indifference to God whether our religion is the truth or a lie. Is not such an assumption contrary to reason? Would not God be lower than man who, according to his better nature, loves justice and truth, and detests injustice and falsehood?

(*b.*) If we could be saved by any faith, the *Apostles and their successors, who preached the Christian faith with indefatigable zeal and under so many persecutions, would have been the greatest fools.* Fools, in like manner, would the many millions of martyrs have been, who, for the sake of their faith, sacrificed property, liberty, even life itself. And the Catholic Church, which for the last eighteen hundred years has made so many strenuous efforts to preserve the faith received from her divine Founder in all its original purity, in order to hand it down to future generations, would have acted very foolishly. The Apostles could have remained quietly at Jerusalem, for the Jews and Gentiles already possessed a faith; missionaries would not have been necessary, because there is no nation or tribe on the face of the globe that has not some religion or faith; the martyrs in this case should have yielded to the wishes of their persecutors and denied their faith, since they could also be saved by holding the faith of the Jews and the Gentiles; finally, the Church should trouble herself

no longer about keeping the faith pure and unaltered, because man could be saved in every religion. But where is there a rational man who would assert such things? No; not every faith is the saving faith, but only that which Jesus Christ has taught. He that has not this faith is separated from Christ and can not hope for salvation, "for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."—*Acts* 4: 12.

PART III.

We can be saved in the Catholic religion only.

1. *Because it is the only true religion taught by Christ.* While other religious denominations, which call themselves the Church of Christ, arose in time, and owe their origin to men, the Catholic Church goes back through centuries, and derives her origin immediately from Christ and his Apostles. But if the Catholic Church is the Church established by Jesus Christ, it follows that she possesses the true faith, for the Church of Christ is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell will not prevail against her. She is continually guided by the Holy Ghost, who teaches her all truth, and proserves her from error, and will remain with her till the end of time. Hence, all the Fathers of the Church teach that the Catholic Church alone possesses the true faith taught by Christ, and that we can be saved only within her pale. St. Augustine says: "Know ye that the Catholic faith is the only true faith. If any one depart from it, he shall rise, not unto life, but unto damnation." Even Luther says: "It is true that in the Popedom there is the word and the preaching of the Apostles, and that we have taken from them the *bible*, *baptism*, the other *sacraments* and *preaching*. How otherwise should we know anything about these matters? Therefore, *faith*, the *Christian Church*, and the *Holy Ghost* must be with them." Remarkable is the testimony which Melancthon bears to the Catholic Church. His mother adjured him upon her death-bed to tell her whether she ought to adhere to the old (Catholic) faith, or to embrace the new. He gave this answer: "Adhere to your old Catholic faith, for it is easier to live in the new religion, but safer to die in the old."

2. *Because the Catholic faith alone contains all the means necessary for sanctification.* Let us speak only of the sacraments. All non-Christians such as Jews, heathens, and Mohammedans, have no sacraments at all, not even baptism, the first and most necessary; they can not, therefore, be saved, the single case excepted in which baptism of water is supplied by the baptism of desire. Christians who are separated from the Catholic Church

have the Sacrament of Baptism, but not of Penance, by which sins committed after baptism are forgiven. They have no priests, at least no validly and lawfully ordained priests, and can not, therefore, even if they confess their sins, be absolved; for only the lawfully ordained Catholic priests, approved of by their bishop, possess power to absolve sinners in the Sacrament of Penance. If heretics sin grievously after baptism (and how often does this happen?), they have, if I except the case of perfect contrition, no means of reconciling themselves with God, and saving their souls. I shall not speak of the other sacraments, the want of which, if it does not render salvation absolutely impossible, at least renders it most difficult. Therefore apart from the fact that one can be saved only in the true faith, millions of infidels and heretics will be excluded from heaven and rejected because they do not possess the means necessary for salvation.

PERORATION.

The Catholic Church is the only institution which Christ has established for the salvation of man; he who through his own fault, does not belong to it will certainly perish. Oh, give thanks to God daily for the Catholic faith, which you possess from your infancy, and show yourselves worthy of it. Take to heart the words of Jesus: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required."—*Luke* 12: 48. And endeavor to avail yourselves of the means for your salvation, which the Church offers you in all the circumstances of life, and in all your spiritual necessities. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE CRIB IN CHRISTIAN HOUSES AND HEARTS.

The child grew and waxed strong.—*Luke* 2: 40.

On this Sunday the Christmas solemnity is still kept up. In the gospel we have an account of the Presentation of Christ in the temple. Mary and Joseph, in conformity with the law of Moses, had brought him thither to present him to the Lord.

Of course, in his case as Mary well knew, it was a needless ceremony. But Christ desired to be like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted; he would be born as a weak, helpless infant, grow and gradually develop into a perfect man. Therefore the gospel says of him: "The child grew and waxed strong."

Christ must also be born in us in a spiritual manner, but in our hearts he must not remain a new born babe, but grow and wax strong. This will be effected if we comply with the admonition of the Prince of the Apostles: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—*II. Peter* 3: 18. In Christian homes cribs are erected during Christmas time, representing to our mind the events of the childhood of Jesus to his twelfth year. These cribs are calculated to awaken in us a devotional spirit and Christian sentiments; and Christ, by their means, grows and waxes strong within us. I shall, therefore, speak to-day—

I. Of the cribs in Christian houses;
II. Of the cribs in Christian hearts.

PART I.

1. *Origin of cribs.*

This devotion originated with St. Francis of Assisium who lived in the twelfth century, and instituted the Order of Friars Minor, afterwards called Franciscans. This saint, whose maxim was, *Let us love the Child of Bethlehem,* as Christmas approached, built a hut in the forest of Grecio and placed therein a manger, with figures of an ox and an ass; also an altar. At the proper time, the Friars Minor, his brethren in the Order, and their desciples in great numbers from the neighboring monasteries, accompanied by a multitude of people, came down from the mountain carrying lighted torches in their hands; for the night in which the Light of the world was born should not be dark. St. Francis, filled with heavenly joy, assisted as deacon of the mass. After the gospel he preached with transporting eloquence to the assembly on the birth of Jesus Christ, and called the Redeemer the adorable Child of Bethlehem.

It is, therefore, the custom of the Franciscans to this day to put up Christmas cribs, that the faithful may be the more vividly reminded of the sweet Child Jesus, and desire to become conformable to him, to be childlike, not according to the body, but in simplicity of heart and purity of morals. Many Christians afterwards imitated St. Francis and erected cribs in their houses. This pious custom happily still exists, and there is scarcely a parish in which a crib is not erected in one place or another.

Children and even adults visit these cribs, and find pleasure in looking at the sweet Infant Jesus lying on hay or straw, and near him the Virgin Mother and the venerable St. Joseph, while, represented in an attitude of adoration, are the angels and the shepherds; and lastly, one turns to gaze at the animals in the stable, which appear so harmless and guileless, seeming to recognize the wonderful Child that lies in their midst.

2. *Advantage of cribs.* Cribs have a beautiful signification—

(*a.*) *For children,* because they awaken and strengthen their religious sentiments, and are calculated to inspire them with love for the divine Child. Parents should explain to their children the meaning of the crib and unite with the explanation wholesome lessons. They may say: See, children, this figure represents Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who for love of us became a poor child; if you are always good children, if you have God before your eyes, and never do anything wrong, whether alone or with others; if you learn well, pray devoutly, and obey willingly, the dear Infant Jesus will be pleased with you and will take you hereafter to live with him in heaven. But if you are bad children, and will not learn or pray, but tell lies and, steal, destroy other people's property, and do other naughty things, the Infant Jesus will forsake you, and when you die, will send you to hell. Therefore, dear children, kneel down now before the crib and promise Jesus very earnestly that you will always be good. In this way cribs will be very beneficial and useful to children.

(*b.*) Cribs have a signification no less beautiful *for grown people.* He who has a childlike, pious mind, and is not an infatuated worldling, feels himself greatly attracted by the crib; tender feelings are awakened in his heart and with the Child Jesus he becomes a child again. Even those who are imbued with the spirit and the principles of the world are moved when they see how merry and happy the children are; they themselves again rejoice over the divine Child whom they loved when children. They can hardly look upon the scene without moistened eyes, and many a time, in presence of the crib and the happy, innocent faces which surround it, have silent tears been seen stealing down the worldling's and the sinner's cheek. Nor is this to be wondered at. The scene forcibly recalls to their mind happy reminiscences of their childhood, and they unconsciously contrast the beauty and joy of innocence with their own seared and blighted hearts. No doubt their guardian angel seizes on the occasion of this softened mood to press upon them the love of the Babe of Bethlehem. The grace of God does the rest. The true Star of Bethlehem, the Light of the world, is risen for

them once more, and dispels the darkness of the shadow of death in which they lay. They see things with other eyes, and thus many no doubt turn from the Christmas crib with firm resolutions to abandon their evil ways, and lovingly adhere to him who, in his infinite love and mercy, became a little child, and finally died on the cross for the salvation of the world.

PART II.

But besides the crib in the church or the house we must also erect for the holy Babe—

I. A crib in our heart, and
II. Preserve it when erected.

1. This is done principally by the reception of the holy sacraments.

(*a.*) *Baptism.* By this sacrament the crib is erected in our heart, for thereby the heart, which was once the abode of Satan, is purified, sanctified, and transformed into a dwelling or crib for Christ. Therefore the priest says: "Depart out of him (or her), O unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter." Baptized persons are not only figuratively, but in reality, dwelling-places, temples of the living God, and the divine Infant, who once reposed in the crib of Bethlehem, really dwells in their hearts. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—*I. Cor.* 3. 16.

This crib was erected in us at our baptism, but have we not torn it down and expelled our Saviour? Alas! which of us has not? We have during the course of our life grievously sinned, lost the grace of innocence, and thereby destroyed the crib in our hearts. We must rebuild it, if we wish to be saved. How can we rebuild it?

(*b.*) *By the reception of the Sacrament of Penance.* This sacrament has been instituted by Christ for the recovery of the lost grace of baptism. He who makes a good confession receives the remission of all the sins committed after baptism, together with the eternal punishment due to them, he again receives sanctifying grace, Satan departs from his heart, and Christ once more takes his abode there. Delay not to rebuild a crib for your Saviour if you have banished him from your heart, Do this during these Christmas holidays. Make a good confession and—

(*c.*) *Receive worthily the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist.* In this sacrament, as faith teaches, Christ is really and substantially

present with his humanity and Divinity. He who communicates receives not only grace, but Jesus Christ himself, the Author of grace. Jesus enters really and substantially into his heart, and dwells there as he formerly dwelt in the crib at Bethlehem: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him."—*John* 6: 57. When we have thus rebuilt the crib for our Saviour in our hearts, we must carefully—

2. *Preserve it.* It is therefore necessary—

(a) *To watch.* Herod decreed the death of the divine Babe of Bethlehem. Jesus has also in our heart enemies, who would expel him. They are the world, the flesh, and the devil. We must therefore be vigilant, lest these enemies rob us of Jesus. "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—*Matt.* 26: 41. Wherein does this watchfulness consist? In avoiding as much as possible those places, persons, pleasures, and in general all occasions which we know from experience to be dangerous to us; intimate familiarity with persons of the other sex, doubtful houses and company; in bridling our exterior senses, the eyes, ears, and tongue; lastly, in subduing our natural inclinations and making them subservient to the gospel. "The soul must be watchful, watchful on every side, watchful in every place, that she may escape the snares of him who pursues her."—*Gregory the Great.*

(b) It is equally necessary *to pray.* When a good friend or a great benefactor visits us, politeness requires that we salute and entertain him: if he stay with us some time, we visit him in turn. Should we omit this, we might give offense and thus lose a friend. When Jesus has chosen our heart for a crib, veneration, love, and gratitude require that we frequently visit him and converse with him. We do this by prayer. He therefore who neglects prayer, offends his heavenly guest, and compels him, as it were, to depart. For this reason we must devote ourselves to prayer in order to retain him in our heart.

But prayer is necessary for another reason. If Jesus is to abide with us, we must persevere in the state of grace, we must not defile our conscience with sin, especially with mortal sin. Now, of ourselves, we are very weak, frail, and incapable of overcoming all temptations, and of avoiding every sin. To do this we need the grace of God, which can only be obtained by prayer, and by prayer alone will it remain with us. For this reason Christ recommends not only watchfulness, but also prayer. "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation." St. Thomas of Aquin says, "In order to be saved we must fight and conquer." But without the assistance of God we can not conquer

so many and such powerful enemies; this divine assistance is obtained only by prayer; consequently without prayer there is no salvation. You must therefore watch and pray in time of temptation.

PERORATION.

There are not many houses in our parish in which cribs may be found, but I sincerely hope and trust that there is not a single heart in which a crib will not be erected for the divine Babe. How unhappy those Christians must be in whose hearts Christ finds no dwelling; Jesus abandons them, as he did the inhabitants of Bethlehem, who refused him shelter, and the result is perdition. Cleanse then your heart from all sin and inordinate inclinations, and implant there the love of God, that Jesus may come to you and make his abode with you. And when he has done so, let it be your greatest, your only care, that he may never be obliged by your sins to depart and give place to the devil. Remember his oft-repeated injunction: "Watch and pray. Pray always. I say unto you: Watch." Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

CHRISTMAS TREES AND CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

And Simeon blessed them.—Luke 2: 34.

We see to-day in the temple at Jerusalem two aged persons, Simeon and Anna, who had waited long and patiently for the expected Messias: and when Mary and Joseph presented the divine Child to the Lord according to the Law of Moses, they beheld for the first time him whom they had so ardently longed to see. What joy, what comfort for those holy souls to be permitted to see the Saviour with their own eyes, to take him into their arms and to press him to their heart! Oh, now their eighty years' sighing and longing is ended they have no longer any wish here below, they are ready and willing to die, for they know him to be upon earth who after a few years will redeem the human race and reconcile it with God.

A heavenly joy is that also which fills every faithful heart during the holy season of Christmas. And this joy is manifested not only at the services in our churches, but also in Christian families, by erecting cribs, putting up Christmas-trees, and bestowing Christmas presents. Having already spoken of cribs in the foregoing discourse, I choose for the subject of our meditation to-day—

I. Chrismas-trees, and
II. Christmas gifts.

Part I.

Christmas-trees.

On Christmas Eve many families put up a Christmas-tree in a spacious room, deck its branches with apples, pears, gilded nuts, tempting sweets, a number of lighted wax tapers, and various other things. This is all done secretly. As soon as everything is in order, the door is opened, and lo! what a surprise for the little ones! Before them stands the beautiful green Christmas-tree with its bright lights and lovely presents, making all thrill with joy.

1. *What does the Christmas-tree symbolize?*

(*a.*) *The tree of knowledge of good and evil.* This tree bore the most delicious fruit, and was very tempting to Adam and Eve, who were still in the state of innocence. Unfortunately they ate of it, contrary to the express prohibition of the Lord, and thereby brought misery upon themselves and all their posterity. The Christmas-tree reminds us of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the more so because on Christmas Eve we commemorate Adam and Eve in the calendar. In this relation, the Christmas-tree would, indeed, be anything but a tree of joy, for it would recall to our mind sin with its long train of misery. But the Christmas-tree symbolizes also another tree, namely:

(*b.*) *The tree of the cross on Calvary,* on which Jesus, the Saviour of the world, suffered and died. This is for us, in truth, the *tree of life,* for on this tree Christ expiated the guilt of our sins, destroyed the kingdom of Satan, reconciled us with God, and opened for us again a pathway to heaven. The Christmas-tree reminds us of this consoling truth. It spreads around the whole room a friendly flood of light, and this signifies that Jesus is the light which enlightens every man that comes into the world. The fruit and good things on the tree represent to us the fruits of the Re-

demption which ripened on the tree of the cross. And seeing the Christmas-tree green in the midst of winter, we are forcibly reminded of the blessings of the tree of the cross, which will never fail to be laden with the fruits of salvation.

2. *What does the Christmas-tree teach us?*

(*a.*) The Christmas-tree is green. Green is the color of hope, and in hope we can live and die, since Jesus Christ has offered himself for us on the tree of the cross. And how precious beyond measure are the things that we are permitted to hope for! We hope for heaven and everything necessary to obtain it, the forgiveness of our sins, and the grace of God. And we hope for these goods with confidence, because God has promised them to us on account of the merits of Christ. As the verdure of Christmas tree continues even in the midst of winter, so hope remains with us even in the wintry days of tribulation; and in the possession of this blessed hope we may live cheerfully and die happily. Examples: the Machabean brothers.—*II. Mach.* 7; St. Paul.—*II. Cor.* 1: 10; *Ephes.* 1: 12.

(*b.*) *The Christmas-tree is decked with resplendent lights.* Christ tells us what these lights signify in the following words: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 16. Good example is one of the most effectual means of leading the erring back to the right path, of encouraging the lukewarm to Christian zeal and fervor, of stregthening the weak, and of urging the good on to perfection. Let these lights on the Christmas-tree be an admonition to you, "that you may be blameless and sincere children of God, without reproof in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."—*Phil.* 2: 15.

(*c.*) The Christmas-tree is laden with many delicious fruits and sweet things. As fruit is to the tree, so are good works to the Christian. The husbandman naturally expects the tree to bring forth good fruit, but if it bring forth bad fruit or none at all, it is worthless and is cut down and cast into the fire.—*Matt.* 7: 19. The same fate awaits the Christian who, like the bad tree, produces no fruit for the divine Husbandman. Like the unprofitable servant mentioned in the gospel, who buried his talent, he will be rejected, cut down, and cast into hell fire. The Christmas-tree with its fruit, says to us, as does the Apostle: "Wherefore, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election."—*II. Pet.* 1: 10. Thus the Christmas-tree not only proposes important truths of our holy religion for our

consideration, but also teaches us how we are to conduct ourselves in order that, as good, fruitful trees, we may hereafter be transplanted into the heavenly Paradise by Christ, the divine Husbandman.

Part II.

Christmas gifts.

Christmas gifts stand in close connection with the mystery of the Christmas feast, and remind us of the words of the prophet: "A child is born to us, a son is given to us."—*Is.* 9: 6. As God out of pure love has given his Son to mankind as a present, so men, moved by this divine love, give tokens of love and esteem to one another.

1. These presents are called *Christmas gifts* and little innocent children firmly believe that Jesus puts all these beautiful things there for them. Is not this belief of the little ones based upon truth? Do we not owe to our divine Saviour all the supernatural gifts and graces which are necessary for our salvation? Our holy faith, the holy sacrifice of the mass, sacraments, sanctifying grace, heaven itself with its joys, are they not all gifts which Christ merited for, and bestowed on, us?

What shall I say? We owe to the Infant Jesus even our temporal goods, for this Child is the "Word by whom all things were made" (*John* 1: 3); and it is the Christian religion that transforms barbarians into civilized people, changes deserts into fertile fields, encourages art and science, thus establishing happiness and prosperity among nations. May we never be unmindful of this!

2. Christmas presents *are prepared* without the knowledge of those to whom they are to be given. Although the principal object may be to surprise the receiver, yet a deeper meaning lies at the bottom of this secrecy, to which expression is given in the Introit of the mass: "For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, thy Almighty Word leapt down from heaven, from thy royal throne."—*Wisdom* 18: 14, 15. Jesus Christ, the precious gift of heaven, comes secretly as it were, upon earth at midnight, into a stable, as a weak child. Mary and Joseph alone are aware of the wonderful mystery, as generally only father and mother know of the gifts which their children are to receive.

3. Christmas gifts are made especially *to children*, who, on account of their tender age and innocence, are the most faith-

ful images of the divine Child. If we look upon a child in its simplicity, humility, candor, and innocence, what is more natural for us than to think of the divine Child who was born on Christmas day? Our heart expands and we feel urged to give the holy Child proofs of our love and gratitude, and, as we can bestow nothing upon him personally, we make our gifts to innocent children, who most resemble him, and who are dearest to him. The gifts, therefore, which we make to children on Christmas Day are in intention made to the Infant Jesus.

4. Adults also receive Christmas gifts. These, too, have their foundation in the Christmas mystery, for this feast is one of joy to the heart of every Christian. The angel announced, "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."—*Luke* 2: 10, 11. Christmas gifts flow from Christmas joy, for joy makes us benevolent. This feast reminds us vividly of the words of Jesus: "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."—*John* 3: 16. This infinite love of the Father urges us to be liberal and merciful towards our fellow-men. Lastly, let us all consider ourselves as children, because, through Jesus Christ, who came into the world as a child, we "have received the spirit of adoption of sons of God, whereby we cry: Abba, Father."—*Rom.* 8: 15. As children love and distribute to one another what they possess, so let us give presents to one another.

PERORATION.

Thus Christmas-trees and Christmas gifts are most intimately connected with the Christmas solemnity, and refer to Jesus Christ, the new-born Saviour, in whom God the heavenly Father hath given us everything. Oh! that we would penetrate deeply into the mystery of the Christmas feast and comprehend its meaning, that our cold hearts might be warmed, and in holy love turned to him, "who hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God."—*Ephes.* 5: 2. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE OBDURACY OF THE SINNER.

Behold, this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel.—Luke 2: 34.

Who could believe that Christ, who came to take away the sins of the world and to destroy the works of the devil, would be the cause of the fall, that is, of the sin and damnation, of any one? Certainly no one can believe it. Christ is the Son of God, and as such is infinitely holy. He therefore who hates and detests wickedness can lead no man into sin. Consequently, when it is said that Christ is set for the fall of many, we must not understand that he was the moving cause of anybody's fall, but only that men, hardened in wickedness, as many Jews were, took occasion from his life, doctrine and miracles, to envy, blaspheme, persecute, and crucify him, in short, to commit the greatest sins, and thereby delivered themselves over to eternal perdition.

In the case of such impenitent, hardened sinners, things that should be instrumental in bringing them to salvation, as the word of God, divine grace, the sacraments, only serve to make them sink deeper into vice. They resemble mud in the street, which becomes harder the more the sun shines upon it. I shall speak to you to-day about the obduracy of the sinner, viz.:

I. The marks, and
II. The causes of obduracy.

Part I.

I shall mention only three marks of obduracy in sin: *The silence of conscience,* the *inefficacy of the grace of God,* and *the unsuccessfulness of all the means of salvation.*

1. *The silence of conscience.* If one who is not yet hardened in vice fall into sin, his conscience is aroused, it reproaches him for having offended God, incurred his displeasure and punishment, and fills him with disquietude, fear, and sadness. But these reproaches become weaker the oftener a man sins and the deeper he sinks into vice. Such persons experience no longer any disquietude or anguish when they have sinned; they seem to be

always in a good humor, lie down at night without a care, and rise cheerfully in the morning; apparently they enjoy peace. This is the total silence of conscience, a mark of obduracy as manifest as it is terrible. To such an obdurate sinner are applicable the words of Holy Scripture: "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth."—*Prov.* 18: 3. Such a person resembles one who is dangerously ill, whose excruciating pains have ceased, and who tranquilly and with a dying voice says: "Now all is well, I feel no more pain." Ah, truly, the body feels no more pain, because it is already benumbed with the coldness of death.

Fortunate those sinners who still feel remorse of conscience! They may have sinned grievously, but they are not yet hardened; God has not entirely departed from them, and there is hope that they will enter into themselves sooner or later and save their souls. But woe to those sinners who have succeeded in altogether silencing their conscience; having no suspicion of their misery or of the risk they run, they remain in this perilous condition, dead to God and to virtue, and their conscience will very probably not awaken till they find themselves before the judgment-seat of God. Beware lest you silence your conscience when it reproaches you, by various false pretexts, such as the example of others, confidence in the mercy of God, or conversion after awhile. This would be to tempt God, who is using your conscience as a means to save you, and by resisting it you labor for your own destruction. After the example of holy penitents, silence your conscience *by a good confession.*

2. *The inefficacy of the grace of God.* God gives to all, even to the greatest sinners, and as long as they live, sufficient grace for salvation, for "he will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."—*I. Tim.* 2; 4. He enlightens them, that they may know what to do and what to avoid; he operates upon their will, yet in such a manner as to leave it free, and strives to recall them from their evil ways and to turn them to virtue; he encourages them to tread in the paths of salvation; he inspires them with confidence in his assistance and mercy; he strengthens and enables them to overcome all temptations and difficulties and to do penance. But there are sinners in whom all the graces which God gives them for their salvation are ineffectual; their heart is a rock into which the waters of divine grace can not penetrate, or which the hardest stroke of the hammer can not rend. What they were years ago they are to-day, sinners; to them the words of the prophet are applicable: "They stopped their ears, not to hear, and they made their heart as the adamant stone."—*Zach.* 7: 11, 12. A terrible example of this obduracy is furnished us in the history of Judas Iscariot. Our divine Saviour chose him

for an apostle, favored him for three years with his company and intimate friendship, instructed him continually in the doctrine of salvation, made him the witness of his most exalted virtues and miracles, communicated to him the power of working miracles, gave him his own flesh to eat and his blood to drink, and invested him with power to consecrate the same; and yet after all these graces he remained obstinate and obdurate. At last, when Judas was really about to perpetrate the infamous crime of treason, Jesus warned him most affectionately, called him by the sweet name of friend, did not refuse the kiss of this monster, and said; "Friend, whereto art thou come? dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" But all in vain. Judas remained obdurate, and his end was despair and suicide.

The second sign of the obduracy of the sinner is *the inefficacy of divine grace.* God, as it were, contends with the sinner and wishes to conquer him. But what a spectacle! The sinner holds out against God and will not allow himself to be conquered. The omnipotent God is defeated, and the imponent sinner, to his own destruction, comes forth victorious over the mercy of God. Mercy is then withdrawn, and the obdurate sinner is left to be dealt with by divine justice. Now, let every one look into his own heart and ask himself whether he belongs to the class of hardened sinners. You do, and you see in your own self an example of what an obdurate sinner is, if you find on examination that for years back your conscience has been clamoring at you to change your life, to forego some sinful indulgence, to attend mass and other religious duties, and you resisted. You are obdurate in your sin, if neither the Lenten season, nor Christmas solemnity, nor mission, nor jubilee, nor Forty Hours' devotion, nor sermons, nor the entreaties of your pastor or relatives, avail to arouse you to a sense of the fearful danger in which your salvation is placed. Woe, woe, to the Christian of this sort, if by prayers and tears of penance he obtain not from God the extraordinary grace necessary to soften his hardened heart. His eternal ruin is inevitable.

3. *The unsuccessfulness of all the means of salvation.* God seeks to save the sinners not only by interior graces, but also by exterior means of salvation. The means which he makes use of for the conversion of the sinner are of two kinds: ordinary ones, such as admonitions, salutary exhortations on the part of the pastors of souls and confessors, of parents and well-meaning friends, the good example of others, especially of superiors, general and particular prayers of the faithful, holy seasons and feasts; the *extraordinary* are such as missions, jubilees, and great calamities. Sinners who are not yet hardened usually avail themselves of these, or, at least, of the extraordinary means. They return from their evil ways and change their life. But there are sinners who

are already so hardened that all these means of salvation prove ineffectual. Of what profit can sermons and salutary admonitions be to them if they never listen to them, or if they listen to them only on certain occasions when they must do so, and then with reluctance and without any intention of paying heed to what they hear? What can holy seasons and feasts profit them when they do not employ them for the service of God but, like all other times, for the gratification of their passions? What benefit will missions and jubilees be to them when they reject the proffered graces and do not even go to confession? What good will afflictions do them when they see in them not the judgments of God, but only natural events? Such Christians carry about them an unmistakable sign of obduracy, for, says St. Bernard: "Hard is the heart that cannot be brought to repentance, nor softened to mildness, nor moved by prayers; that yields not to threats, and by blows becomes mere obstinate."

Reflect and see whether you have any of these signs of obduracy. Ask yourselves whether you have employed these ordinary and extraordinary means of salvation, and if so, how you have used them. If you are compelled to say that you have neglected these means entirely, or have not made proper use of them for your purification and sanctification, and that notwithstanding them all you continue to live in your old bad habits and vices, then you are indeed of the number of obdurate sinners, and you have every reason to fear the worst. God grant that there may not be even a single one among us who finds these signs of obduracy already engraven on his soul.

PART II.

I shall mention only three causes of obduracy: *unbelief*, the *habit of sinning*, and the *presumption of the sinner*.

1. *Unbelief*. It is self-evident that unbelief leads to hardness of heart. Let us suppose that a sinner no longer believes in God, nor in the immortality of the soul, nor in heaven or hell; what motive can such a one have to restrain his passions, to renounce sin and be converted? Certainly none; at least no supernatural motive, such as is required for a true conversion. The unbeliever therefore will continue his sinful life as long as he can, and if he be prevented from actually committing the sin he will do so in his heart and his amendment will be only external.

Behold why so many in our days live in complete hardness of heart. They have suffered shipwreck of the faith! Their conscience may be occasionally aroused and reproach them, they may hear Christian truths preached to them; nevertheless they persevere in

sin, for they say: "Why should I trouble myself? Everything ends with this present life; hereafter there will be neither reward nor punishment." Oh, take care not to lose your faith; for unbelief, which in itself is one of the greatest sins, begets hardness of heart and leads by two ways to eternal damnation.

2. *The habit of sinning.* Every one knows how strong is the force of habit; it often causes those things which were formerly hard and bitter to become after a while easy and pleasant, nay, even necessary. This is particularly true of the habit of sinning. He who commits a sin the first time, feels some repugnance interiorly, some resistance; his conscience is aroused and he does not readily yield to passion and sin. The second and the third time he sins with greater facility; sin appears to him by no means so execrable as it did the first time; and the oftener he sins the less he cares about it, until at last sin loses in his eyes its baseness, and he commits it as easily as if it were a matter of no moment. Thus it is that the habitual sinner violates chastity; that he gets drunk, curses, blasphemes, cheats, slanders, and detracts his neighbor most unjustly, without feeling the least remorse of conscience, or reflecting that if he do not amend his life he will be lost forever. It is quite evident that such a habit of sinning begets obduracy. Hence, St. Bernard says: "The oft-repeated sin produces a habit, and the habit a necessity, and the necessity the impossibility to renounce it; and the impossibility leads to despair, and despair to eternal damnation." He therefore who desires not to be lost eternally must resist in the beginning, avoid the first sin, and fear nothing so much as to become an habitual sinner.

3. *The presumption of the sinner.* Many who sin, and live in sin without a purpose of amendment, nevertheless hope that God will be merciful and not reject them. This is to hope presumptuously, and leads, not to salvation, but to damnation. True, God is infinitely merciful and ready to pardon all sins, however great and grievous thny may be; but this mercy regards only those sinners who are truly penitent. "How great is the mercy of the Lord, and his forgiveness to them that turn to him."—*Ecclus.* 17: 28. He who is not truly sorry for his sins, and has not firmly resolved to avoid them, but deliberately continues to live on in sin, that man is excluded from the mercy of God and will be the object of God's wrath and vindictive justice. It is only an artifice of the devil that makes the sinner believe that he has everything to hope from God, and nothing to fear. Through this unhappy blindness he loses that salutary fear of the Almighty which is "the beginning of wisdom," never thinks of amendment, and perseveres in a life of sin. To such blind sinners I would address the words of the Holy Ghost: "Add not sin upon sin, and say not:

The mercy of God is great; he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins; for mercy and wrath quickly come from him; and his wrath looketh upon sinners."—*Ecclus.* 5: 5-7.

PERORATION.

I have now explained to you the signs and causes of the obduracy of the sinner. Sinners are everywhere to be found, and unfortunately there will be some in our parish. But, oh, let us hope that in our midst is to be found no one who could be pronounced obdurate. Truly, the condition of the hardened sinner is frightful to contemplate. He stands, as it were, with one foot in hell. The saying is true which declares that "to sin is human, but to persevere in sin, diabolical." Unhappy sinners, be men, not demons. Abide not calmly in your sin. Avail yourselves of the few days of the departing year to effect your reconciliation with God. Make a good confession, and if any one has had the misfortune to fall into mortal sin, let him rise from his fall by the grace of God without delay; let him become speedily and truly repentant and save his soul. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

ANNA A BEAUTIFUL PATTERN FOR OUR IMITATION.

She departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day.—Luke **2: 37.**

The end for which we are created is to know, to love, and to serve God. Thus saith the law of God: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve."—*Matt.* 4: 10. If we conscientiously fulfil this our vocation here on earth, we shall obtain our end hereafter, and reign with God in his kingdom, where joys and delights abound forever. We have a beautiful example in Anna, the aged widow, of whom the gospel of this day says: "She departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day." Anna shows us by her example that the service of God consists—

I. In serving in the temple;
II. In fasting;
III. In prayer.

Part I.

1. It was the custom among the Jews for pious widows and virgins to devote themselves to the service of God in the temple. They lived together in houses attached to the temple, and led a life similar to that in our Catholic sisterhoods. There is no doubt that Anna lived in one of these houses, for the gospel says of her, that she never departed from the temple. Like these pious widows and virgins, she considered it one of her principal duties to serve in the temple, to sweep and adorn it.

This was a good work, a service of God. King Ezechias had given at Jerusalem the express command to purify the temple of the Lord, and to take away all filth out of the sanctuary.—*II. Paral.* 29; 4. And we read in the gospel that Christ drove the buyers and sellers with their doves and other articles of traffic out of the temple, and upset the tables of the money-changers, and thus purified it. That the adorning of the temple is a good work is evident from the fact that God appeared to Solomon, who had built the temple of Jerusalem, and, as it was adorned most sumptuously, promised the king that the divine eyes "shall be open and the divine ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in that place."—*II. Paral.* 7: 15.

2. Anna is a beautiful model for our imitation in the service of the Lord. Let us likewise purify and adorn our church. But you may think and say: How can we do this? It is not our business to clean and adorn the church; this is the duty of those who are appointed for the purpose. I reply, you can, nevertheless, render this service in various ways.

(*a.*) Give something now and then towards the adorning of your church and altar, for the purpose of procuring vestments and holy vessels and such things as are necessary for the worthy celebration of divine worship. This certainly is a work pleasing to God, especially when a church is poor and destitute of the necessary articles, because its object is the honor of God and the edification of the faithful. Every lady of the congregation ought to be a member of the Altar Society. "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house, and the place where thy glory dwelleth." Pious Christians of all times, among them many kings and princes, as the Emperor Constantine I., his saintly mother Helen, the Emperor Henry II. and his devout wife Cunigund, have given us

beautiful examples of liberality in contributing towards the adornment of the house of God.

(*b.*) You yourselves are temples of God, as St. Paul says. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—*I. Cor.* 3: 16. In this temple there is, perhaps, need of purification: clean it, banish sin from your heart, and all vain, avaricious, unchaste, envious, malignant, and revengeful thoughts and desires, and mortify all inordinate inclinations. Adorn the temple of your heart with Christian thoughts and virtues, with a true love of God and your neighbor. This is far more necessary and meritorious than the purification and adorning of churches; and the poor, as well as the rich, can do this. Whenever you enter a clean, nicely adorned church, ask yourselves the question: How is it with the temple of my heart? Is that clean and as nicely adorned as this church?

(*c.*) Your houses, Christian fathers and mothers, are to be temples of God. Beware lest they become dens of thieves. Purify them from every filth. If you notice faults in your children and servants, correct them. If people come to your house who might rob the inmates of their virtue and religion, who would soil your temple with filthy conversation, profane language, backbiting, etc., either put such persons from your door without delay, or give them very distinctly to understand that they must never attempt to defile your house with their wickedness. Do what you can to make your children and servants walk in the fear of God, for good children and pious servants are the most beautiful ornaments of a Christian house. If this temple service in your own house appear difficult to you, remember the words of the Apostle: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."—*I. Tim.* 5: 8.

PART II.

The service of God consists also *in fasting.*

1. In *corporal fasting.* God himself prescribed fasting at certain times to the Jews. Thus we read (*Lev.* 16: 29): "This shall be to you an everlasting ordinance: the seventh month, the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls," that is, fast. Anna observed this divine ordinance of fasting from her youth; she served God by fasting. She observed not only the regular fast days prescribed by the Law, but imposed upon herself voluntary fastings, and fasted even in her advanced age, when she had become weak and frail, and when fasting must have been a great hardship to her.

This is certainly an example which we might imitate to a greater extent than we now do. The Church from the earliest ages prescribed fasting for the faithful, because Christ himself gave us an example when he fasted forty days and forty nights, and because he said: "When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then they shall fast."—*Matt.* 9: 15. Moreover, fasting subjects the flesh to the spirit, it is a way of doing penance, and renders us more fit for the practice of virtue and prayer. According to this ordinance, we are to deprive ourselves of some food and drink and abstain from the use of flesh meat on certain days. Christians who make light of the ecclesiastical precept of fasting act contrary to the ordinances of God in the Old Law, to the spirit of Christianity in the New, which is a spirit of mortification, to the word and example of Christ and the saints, and to the express mandates and teaching of the Church; to them are applicable the words of our divine Saviour: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. Reflect well upon this, and observe conscientiously the ecclesiastical precept of fasting.

2. *In spiritual fasting.* Anna was not content with corporal fasting, as the Pharisees were, whose fasting was anything but a good work, or one pleasing to God, since they chastised only the body, but allowed the basest passions to grow exuberantly in their hearts, such as pride, avarice, hatred, and revenge. Anna combined corporal with spiritual fasting, practicing unceasingly virtues and good works. Her virtues were: continence, piety, seclusion from the world and its vanities, fidelity in the performance of all the ordinances of the law, watchfulness over herself, and mortification of all her sinful inclinations. This spiritual fast was in itself a service well-pleasing to God, and stamped upon her corporal fasting the seal of merit.

3. We must try to imitate Anna. Corporal fasting, which the Church prescribes, is necessary and good, because it is an ordinance of God, but without spiritual fasting it would not be meritorious. "What does it avail to emaciate the body with fasting, if the soul is puffed up with pride? What praise shall we receive for paleness caused by fasting, if we are livid with envy?" —*St. Jerome.* What does it avail us to abstain from wine, if we are drunk with wickedness and iniquity? Spiritual fasting consists in abstaining from sin, in curbing our passions, in suppressing our sinful thoughts, inclinations, and desires, and subduing our senses. This is true fasting. Abstinence from flesh meat is ordained that the inordinate desires of the flesh may be tamed. He that fasts must conquer his anger, subdue his inordinate desires, resist avarice and be liberal and charitable to the poor.

Corporal fasting is not always to be observed, but only on certain days, whereas we are obliged to fast spiritually at all times; we must observe it every day, as long as we live—on Easter Sunday as well as on Good Friday.

PART III.

Finally, to the service of God belongs *prayer*.

1. *Interior prayer*. Wherein does this interior prayer consist? In having God and the salvation of our souls always before our eyes, in occupying ourselves frequently with pious meditations on religious truths, and aiming at interior recollection. This manner of praying is an excellent service of God, because the powers and faculties of the soul, will, memory, and understanding, are employed for the honor of God, and at the same time the divine and moral virtues are practiced. In such a way Anna served the Lord. She was entirely dead to the world, and, as it were, buried in the solitude of the temple. She had but one wish on earth—to see the promised Messias. She was completely absorbed in God, heard nothing, spoke nothing, read nothing, except of God and divine things; she was led altogether by the Spirit of God, wherefore God gave her the particular grace and gift of prophecy, and prolonged her life, that she might see, before she died, the Redeemer of the world. You also can and must practice interior prayer. Recollect yourselves daily, morning and evening, and direct your thoughts to God; do the same several times during the day, whilst you are at work, and make some pious aspirations. Employ Sundays and holidays particularly in this holy exercise by reading a spiritual book, by earnestly thinking of the state of your souls and its eternal destiny, by reflecting on religious truths, and making good resolutions to abandon a certain fault, or to practice a certain virtue. He who does not practice interior prayer in this in or a similar manner, will fall into lukewarmness and forgetfulness of salvation, and become a worldling—one who cares about every earthly concern more than he does about the salvation of his soul. Therefore, let us not neglect interior prayer.

2. *Vocal prayer*. This also is a service of God, because by it not only the faculties of the soul, but also those of the body, with its senses and members, the eyes, tongue, lips, hands, and feet, are employed as instruments for the worship of God. The gospel expressly says that Anna practiced this vocal prayer: "She departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day." She was truly and really devout, looking upon prayer as a duty; for she went to the temple to pray, not

only in the daytime, but also during the night. Since Anna is praised in the Sacred Scripture for her fervor in prayer, and since God favored her so greatly by conferring upon her the gift of prophecy, you see how wrongly Christians act who speak contemptuously of prayer, who pray seldom or negligently, and who ridicule those who manifest fervor in prayer. He who is an enemy of prayer has a wrong idea of the spiritual life; he is dead to God, and partakes of the nature of the devil, if he can not and will not pray, and therefore is and will remain for ever an enemy of God. "Prayer," says St. Augustine, "is the nourishment of the soul; as the body cannot live without food, so the soul cannot sustain life without prayer." By no means neglect prayer. Make it your rule of life to say at least a short morning and evening prayer. Christian parents, see to it that all your children say their prayers morning and evening, and before and after meals. Practice prayer especially on Sundays and holidays. Go to church in the forenoon, for this in obligatory, and if possible, attend Vespers in the afternoon.

PERORATION.

You see that according to the example of Anna, the pious widow, the service of God consists in the temple service and in prayer and fasting. But how can you serve God in this threefold manner? Love the beauty of the house of God, and contribute your share towards it, as far as may be necessary, and your means allow; especially purify the temples of your heart and your house from all evil, and adorn them with Christian virtues. Keep strictly the fast days and days of abstinence prescribed by the Church, and lead a mortified life. Be devoted to prayer, recollect yourselves frequently, occupy yourselves with God and the affairs of your soul, and awaken pious aspirations and good resolutions within you. Practice interior prayer at home, as well as in the church. In such a way you will serve God according to the example of Anna, and you may hope as a reward to share in her eternal felicity in heaven. Amen.

SUNDAY BETWEEN NEW YEAR'S DAY AND EPIPHANY.

EPISTLE. *Gal.* 4: 1-7. Brethren: As long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father: so we also, when we were children, were serving under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law; that he might redeem them who were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father. Therefore, now he is not a servant, but a son. And if a son, an heir also through God.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

SIGNS BY WHICH A CHILDLIKE MIND IS KNOWN.

Because you are sons, God hath sent the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father.—Gal. 4: 6.

The epistle for to-day is the same as that read in the mass on last Sunday. In it the Apostle speaks of the condition of man in the Old and the New Law, and shows that through Jesus Christ we have been made children of God and heirs of heaven. What a dignity, what a grace! As children of God we can approach with confidence, and pray to him, Abba, Father. Everything depends on our conducting ourselves as true children of God, for only the good and pious will be acknowledged by God as his children and made heirs of his kingdom. We must therefore take innocent children for our model and be disposed towards God, our heavenly father, just as good children are towards their father and mother. Of this childlike disposition, and the marks by which it may be known, I shall speak to you to-day. It is known—

I. By attachment to father and mother;
II. By belief in their word;
III. By confidence in them;
IV. By affection for them.

Part I.

By attachment to father and mother.

Father and mother are everything to the child. Where the parents are, the child will be; it runs after them, clings to them, is led by their hand, and cries if it must remain behind. It prefers its father and mother to all others. Even if a king or a queen in splendid attire approach it, the child will turn away and stretch its little hands towards its parents, and though they be poor and in rags, it feels at home and safe only with them. Even if parents look cross at it and punish it, it will not leave them, but turns to them and caresses them. This is its childlike disposition, its attachment to its father and mother. In the same way the childlike disposition of a Christian manifests itself towards God, his heavenly Father. Nowhere is he content but with God; he wishes always to be with him; therefore he loves to think of God. Thus St. Aloysius' thoughts were always with God. Not only when he was alone and at prayer, but also in company, and in all the labors and distractions of life he was interiorly recollected and occupied with divine things. His superiors forbade his thinking constantly of God, because they feared a continually contemplative life might injure his health; and he tried to obey, but in vain; if he did turn his thoughts to worldly things, they would, in spite of all he could do, return to God. The childlike Christian loves to speak to God; the hours which he can pass in prayer are the sweetest of his life; he prays whenever he has leisure, even at his work he raises his mind from time to time to God, and says a heartfelt prayer. John the Abbot in his travels through the desert one day met a venerable old man, who knelt with folded hands upon a board, absorbed in devotion, his eyes turned towards heaven. When the pious old man arose from his prayer, John noticed that the board, owing to the constant kneeling, was hollowed and red with drops of blood. Thus the saints prayed. A childlike Christian receives Jesus in holy communion as often as he can, and esteems himself happy to be able to unite himself with his God and Saviour. When the priest brought the Viaticum to St. Philip Neri, he exclaimed, "Behold my Love, behold my Love; oh, give me my Love!"

In a similar manner, the childlike disposition of a pious Christian manifests itself: he is attached to God with his whole soul. Is this also the case with you? Are your thoughts often with God?

Do you love to pray? Does it afford you joy and pleasure to receive him in holy communion? If you are obliged to answer negatively, a childlike disposition is wanting in you and a radical amendment is necessary; for without a childlike mind you can not be children of God, nor have a claim to the inheritance of his kingdom.

PART II.

By belief in the word of father and mother.

1. Whatever the father and mother say is infallible truth to a child. If they say to it: My child, this is right and good, the child believes them; if they say: This is wrong and wicked, it also believes them. It never occurs to the child to question the father's or mother's word. If anybody were to represent the contrary as the truth, the child would open its eyes wide, shake its head, and say: No, no, father and mother told me differently.

2. In like manner you must manifest a childlike mind. Christians who have a childlike disposition believe with joyful readiness what their mother the Church teaches, and are unshaken in their faith, and in this faith they find light, comfort, and peace. If ever a doubt arise they suppress it at once, and if any one try to seduce them to unbelief, they repulse him with indignation, and would suffer their heart to be torn out of their body rather than lose their faith. They say with St. Augustine: "Faith is heaven's greatest boon, better than gold and silver, riches, and broad acres." Examples: The holy martyrs, who sacrificed all, even life itself, for the sake of the faith.

Do you possess this childlike disposition? Do you esteem your faith as the greatest treasure of heaven? Do you always cling to the holy Catholic Church? Would you be ready to lose all rather than sacrifice your faith? Ah! how many are there now-a-days who are only nominal Catholics, who are not ashamed to side with the enemies of the Church, and fashion and modernize their faith according to the spirit of the times. Oh! if such Christians would but reflect on the words of St. Augustine: "If we do not walk in faith here, we shall not hereafter arrive at the beatific vision;" and on the words of St. Cyprian: "He that has not the Church for his mother can not have God for his father."

PART III.

By confidence in father and mother.

1. The child is remarkable for its confidence in its father and mother. It is naturally very timid. The barking of a dog even

at a distance, any unusual noise or sight, is apt to conjure up in its young mind all kinds of apprehensions, and often in its fright at such trifles it will burst into tears of anguish. But if its parents be near, it knows no fear; and even in real danger it is quiet, for it seems to think that where father and mother are, no harm can happen to it. And when the real danger draws near, it begins to cry and clings to its parents for the desired refuge and help. If any one attempt to injure it, it threatens him, saying: I shall tell my father if you do that. If it becomes sick and sees the physician by its bedside, it is afraid; but if father or mother say: Do not be afraid, my child, the doctor will not harm you; he loves you and will make you well again, it becomes quiet and allows itself to be treated by the physician.

2. So the Christian with a childlike mind places his entire confidence in God, his heavenly Father. He is indeed aware of his own weakness and impotence; he also knows that numberless enemies are seeking his ruin, and that every day brings danger for body and soul. But he does not, on that account, become discouraged and faint-hearted; he turns to God and comforts himself with the thought: God is my Father, he is powerful enough to protect me in every situation of life, and being Love and Goodness itself, he will not allow anything to harm me. Even in the greatest danger, in extreme necessity, he stands immovable in his confidence in God, and says with David, "If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear." —*Ps.* 26: 3. Examples: The three young men, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago (*Dan.* 3), and St. Paul.—*II. Cor.* 1: 9, 10. In like manner, you must prove your childlike mind by confidence in God, your Father in heaven. Be not like those Christians who expect everything from men, and little or nothing from God. They sin grievously against God, and to them the words of the prophet are applicable: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord."—*Jer.* 17: 5. Trust in God, for "blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence; and he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture; and it shall not fear when the heat cometh."—*Jer.* 17: 7, 8. Let not your trust in God waver when you languish in tribulation without seemingly finding relief from him. It is God's providence to appoint when and how he will come to our assistance. As you know, the Church is now persecuted in Europe and elsewhere; this persecution has already lasted several years, and instead of decreasing becomes more violent every year; let us not, however, lose courage, but persevere steadfastly in our confidence in him who has said: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her." Jesus, who seems to sleep now, will

sooner or later arise and command the winds and the waves to subside, and there shall be a great calm. If we do not abandon God, he will certainly never abandon us.

PART IV.

By affection for father and mother.

Parents are, as I said before, everything to the child; it clings to them with its whole soul. It feels so happy if father and mother are pleased with it and are affectionate towards it; on the contrary, nothing pains a child more than to notice that father and mother are displeased on account of a fault; it will not rest till they look upon it again with fond and loving eyes. The love which it has for its parents urges it to do conscientiously all that is required; it does not wait for a command, but performs with alacrity what it judges from their eyes to be their will: their slightest wish is a command. Since it knows that father and mother act for the best, even if they sometimes command what is difficult, it overcomes itself and is ready to make every sacrifice in order to accomplish their wish. In like manner the childlike mind of the true Christian manifests itself. He loves God above all things, and nothing can be compared with the felicity he experiences when he can say with a good conscience: God is satisfied with me; I have his approval. What disquietude, what sorrow pierces his soul if he has committed, I do not say a mortal sin, but even a slight fault. He is profoundly sorry for it, atones for it by works of penance, and asks pardon of God. Mary Theresa, the consort of Louis XIV., king of France, had a very tender conscience. She once committed an insignificant fault, of which she was continually thinking in the bitterness of her soul. Her friends tried to comfort her, telling her that it was only a venial sin. She replied: "God is offended by it, and, therefore, what I have done is a deadly wound to my soul." Great things are required of a Christian; he must do violence to himself, in order to bear away the kingdom of heaven. A childlike mind makes the Christian exclaim with St. Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or hunger? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" Yes, it is a childlike mind that urges the Christian to do what he knows to be pleasing to God, even if it should not be commanded; he embraces with joy every opportunity for the exercise of virtues and good works.

Are we animated by this childlike spirit? Are we solicitous to do the will of God in all things? Alas! many of us commit daily, perhaps, not only venial, but even mortal sins, without being

disquieted, and live in the state of sin for years, without thinking of being reconciled to God by sincere repentance. When there is a question of temporal gain, or the gratification of a passion, many spare no labor, no sacrifice; but the least thing they are required to do for God and the salvation of their soul is too difficult for them. Many pass their days thoughtlessly, are indolent in doing good, and neglect the duties of their religion and state of life. Where is the childlike mind in such Christians? where their love of God?

PERORATION.

Let us not content ourselves with being merely called children of God, but let us strive to be such in reality. Let us prove our childlike disposition by our actions. Let us cling to God with our whole heart, have him always before our eyes, and love to converse with him in holy prayer; let us visit him frequently in the Most Holy Sacrament, and esteem ourselves happy to be allowed to receive him often into our hearts. Let us stand steadfastly by our holy faith, banish every doubt, and not allow ourselves to become wavering in our belief by the words and sophisms of godless men. Let us not forget that it is impossible to please God and to be saved without faith. Let us trust in God, for He "is our refuge and strength, a helper in troubles."—*Ps.* 45: 2. Let us love God above all things, and manifest our love by doing what is pleasing to him, though it be sometimes difficult. God and the fulfilment of his holy will should be the end which we should strive to attain as long as we live. This is that childlike mind with which we should perform all things, that we may be children of God in truth, and become heirs of his everlasting kingdom in heaven. Amen.

SUNDAY BETWEEN NEW YEAR'S DAY AND EPIPHANY.

Gospel. *Matt.* 2: 19-23. At that time: when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead that sought the life of the child. Who arose and took the child and his mother and came into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his Father, he was afraid to

go thither: and being warned in sleep, retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets: that he shall be called a Nazarite.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE RETURN OF THE HOLY FAMILY INTO THEIR OWN COUNTRY.

You know that King Herod had decreed the death of the divine Infant because he feared to lose his throne through him, the new-born King of the Jews. When the sages from the East did not return to inform him of the dwelling-place of the Holy Family, he ordered all the male children of Bethlehem and its neighborhood, from two years old and under, to be murdered, thinking that the Child Jesus, whose destruction alone was sought, could certainly not escape. But man proposes and God disposes. Joseph had been warned by an angel to flee into Egypt with Mary and the Child. When the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem were slain, the Holy Family was already in Egypt, beyond the reach of Herod's murderous hand. The gospel of this day records the return of the Holy Family into their own country. I shall divide it into two parts.

I. God commands Joseph to return into his own country.
II. Joseph executes the divine command.

PART I.

God commands Joseph to return into his own country.

Here we have for our consideration—

1. *The time when God commanded Joseph to return: after Herod was dead.* The Herod mentioned in this day's gospel was the father of that Herod who afterwards imprisoned John the Baptist and caused him to be beheaded, and who ridiculed Jesus; he had been surnamed "the Great," but was one of the most cruel tyrants that ever sat upon a throne. His lust for power was insatiable. To secure his throne, he shed blood in torrents and caused his own consort, Mary Anna, and three of his sons to be put to death. In comparison with his other cruelties the murder of the children at Bethlehem was only a minor affair, wherefore profane historians do not even mention it. At last the hand of God overtook the bloodthirsty monster. He was attacked

by a painful and loathsome disease; worms consumed him alive, his breath and sores infected the air; intolerable to himself and to others he tried to take his own life, and ordered his son Antipater to be killed on the same day. Knowing well that the Jews would rejoice at his death, he determined to change their joy into tears. What did he do? He caused the most noble of the Jews to be arrested, and gave orders for them to be massacred immediately after his death. A few days afterwards the impious wretch died in despair, but his order for the execution of the Jews was not carried out.

Behold, this was Herod of whom the gospel of to-day says: "At that time, when Herod was dead." This ruler had resorted to every measure in order to make his throne secure, and for this end shed the blood of thousands; but what did it profit him at the last? The unhappy wretch lost *all*, not only his throne, but also, what is infinitely more, his immortal soul; he was damned. Such is the end of every impenitent sinner. Death robs him of everything, money, estate, honors, dignities, pleasures and joys, and precipitates him into the abyss of hell. Oh, how foolish is the sinner! Herod was a bloodthirsty man, and as such he died. As a man lives, so shall he die. Do not, therefore, delay your conversion in the hope of a death-bed repentance; on the death-bed there are, as a rule, only two kinds of sinners; the obstinate, and penitents in appearance. Among a thousand who live in the state of sin, scarcely one dies well. Because Herod was successful in temporal affairs, and raised himself to honor and power, the world called him "Great". How false is the judgment of the world! Be not blinded by it, neither yield your assent to it.

2. *Through whom did God command Joseph to return?* Through an angel, for we read: *An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph.* Four times an angel appeared to Joseph: the first time, when he intended to put Mary away; the second time, when he was admonished to flee with her and the child into Egypt; the third and the fourth time, as we read in the gospel of this day.

God has given to every one of us, even in our mother's womb, an angel of heaven, to watch over and protect us from all perils of body and soul, and to lead us to our eternal destiny. Our guardian angel is always at our side and confers on us numberless benefits. Let us show ourselves grateful by listening to his inspirations and permitting ourselves to be guided by him. God wills this, for he says: "Behold, I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned; for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and my name is in him."—*Exodus* 23: 20, 21.

3. *In what words did God command Joseph to return?*

(*a.*) *Arise.* When the angel said to Joseph in Judea, "Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt," (*Matt.* 2: 13), we find this injunction natural, because haste was necessary, to withdraw the divine Child from the murderous hand of Herod. But how does it happen that Joseph is again admonished in the night to arise and begin his journey into the land of Israel? It mattered not whether Joseph departed from Egypt a few days sooner or later, because in Egypt the Child was in no danger. We do not know the reason why Joseph should again begin his journey in haste, but two important lessons for us are contained in the word, "Arise." To be aroused from a refreshing sleep in the midst of the night, and rise immediately, requires self-command and strength of will, because it is disagreeable to human nature. But as Joseph overcame himself, so must we, when once we know the will of God. Considering all that Christ did for our sakes, that for love of us he was obedient even unto the death of the cross, no obedience should be too difficult for us. Moreover, the word "Arise" may serve as a lesson for us. We may profitably call that short word to mind every morning when it is time to get up, and not stop to think, and wait to be called again and again, indulging in sloth. We should, like Joseph, rise without delay, remembering that such is God's will, and that he it is who in reality calls us to our daily duties. It is a little self-denial, but, if done for the love of God, a very meritorious action.

(*b.*) *Take the child and his mother.* The beauty and significance of the language here used by the angel can be comprehended only by the Catholic; he alone possesses the true faith with regard to the mystery of the Incarnation. The angel did not say: Take thy child and his mother, or, Take thy wife and child. Why? Because Joseph was only the foster-father of Jesus. Christ as man had a mother but no father, and as God, a Father but no mother. In other words, he is, as to his divine nature, the eternal Son of the Father, having, as God, no mother; and as to his human nature, he derives it from his Virgin Mother, having, as man, no father; thus, as the old schoolmen would put it, having his divinity through his paternity, and his humanity through his maternity. Hence the angel says "his mother," because Mary is the real and true mother of Jesus, having conceived him in her virginal womb by the power of the Holy Ghost and brought him forth into the world.

(*c.*) *For they are dead that sought the life of the child.* Why is the plural number used; Was is not Herod alone who sought the life of the Child? He, it is true, was the author and instigator of

the wicked designs upon the life of the divine Infant, but his bad example was imitated by many, especially by his sons, who also hated and sought the life of the Child. But Joseph had nothing to fear from them, for, like Herod, they too were dead.

The eldest son had murdered his two brothers, and Herod caused him to be put to death. Thus die the impious, and the persecutions they inflict upon the pious also come to an end. Let us not lose courage, if numberless enemies battle against holy Church and strive to inflict upon her a deadly blow; sooner or later it shall be said of them, "They are dead." But the Church will not die; her bishops and priests, like the Holy Family, will return from their exile in the Egypt of persecution, and we shall again enjoy the blessings of peace.

PART II.

Joseph executes the divine command.

1. *Who arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.* When Joseph received the command to flee into Egypt, he "arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt."—*Matt.* 2: 13, 14. To leave his own country in the night, and go into a foreign land inhabited by idolaters, without any knowledge of the place, without any preparation for so long and laborious a journey, was hard, yet Joseph obeyed, and God desired now to reward his obedience; for he gave him a command that filled him with great joy, viz., that he should return into his own country. What could be sweeter and more desirable than to return to and live in his own country?

This should be an incentive to us to obey God in difficult undertakings. If we obey him when he says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (*Matt.* 16: 24), he will, in recompense for our obedience, one day give a command that we shall most cheerfully obey: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."—*Matt.* 25: 34.

2. *But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea, in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither.* Joseph had returned into the land of Israel, which at that time was divided into four tetrarchies, or principalities. In one of these, Judea, the land of the Jews, Archelaus, a son of Herod, reigned. In this country, and probably in Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, and where his forefathers had lived, Joseph intended to settle down; but when he heard that Archelaus, equally as cruel and impious as his

father Herod, reigned there, he hesitated to go thither, for he feared that the life of his foster-child would be imperilled.

Parents, masters, mistresses, and guardians have in Joseph a beautiful model as to how they should care for their children and those under their charge, that nothing hurtful may happen to them. They should never allow them to visit places where danger threatens their innocence and virtue. If you have no children, you have a soul; guard it against everything that might hurt it, lest you lose it eternally.

3. *And being warned in sleep, he retired into the quarters of Galilee, and coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets: that he shall be called a Nazarite.*

God did not leave Joseph long in perplexity, but instructed him again by an angel to go with Jesus and Mary into Galilee. Here Antipas was ruler; he was not so cruel as his predecessors, and caused no fear for the life of the divine Child. Why did not the angel say at once that they should go into Galilee? The Fathers of the Church reply: God leads man only step by step, and does not at once, as a rule, reveal all his designs. If we obey the first inspirations of God, we deserve to receive further instruction, and so to obtain our end, like Joseph. But, according to his example, we must also exercise prudence and ask light of God. Nazareth was a village in Galilee, where Mary had formerly lived, and where she had conceived Jesus. Here Joseph made his permanent abode until his blessed death. Jesus also lived at Nazareth until his thirtieth year, wherefore he received the name "Nazarite." Galileans were greatly despised by the Jews, because some Gentiles lived among them, who were looked upon as uncircumcised, and consequently unclean. But the inhabitants of Nazareth were not only held in contempt because they were Galileans, but also on account of the village being of an insignificant origin and not known in the Old Testament. Hence, also, Nathanael, full of astonishment, said to Philip, who assured him that the Messias promised by God was from Nazareth, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Jesus, then, on account of his long sojourn at Nazareth was called a Nazarite, a term of contempt among the Jews, meaning a despised person. Thus Christ exhibits himself to us in the most profound humility, to humble our pride, and particularly to teach us that we can enter into the kingdom of heaven only by the path of humility: "Amen, I say unto you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 3.

PERORATION.

From the event mentioned in this day's gospel, we see very conspicuously how lovingly and wisely God leads his own, and how he makes use of various means to accomplish his designs. Let us resign ourselves to the will of divine Providence in every situation of life. Though we may be obliged to undergo trials and difficulties, let us not waver in our trust in God; let us always do what is right, have a good conscience, and then everything will turn out well for us, as it did for the Holy Family. The Lord will protect us by his powerful and merciful hand in all the circumstances of life, and we can say with confidence: "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing."—*Ps.* 22: 1.

SUNDAY BETWEEN NEW YEAR'S DAY AND EPIPHANY.

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3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE QUALITIES OF FAITH.

Who arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.—Matt. 2: 21.

God commanded Joseph by an angel to flee into Egypt with Mary and the divine Child. His obeyed instantly. He lived in Egypt until the death of Herod, when God admonished him again by an angel to return into the land of Israel. And Joseph, "arose and, took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel." When on his journey he was told by an angel that he should not go into Judea, but into Galilee, he obeyed again without hesitation, and with Jesus and Mary made Nazareth his abode. We also must do the will of God as readily as Joseph did. God makes known his will to us by his holy Church; he instituted her for the salvation of nations; she is under the continual protection of the Holy Ghost, the infallible Teacher of truth. We must, therefore, accept with a believing heart whatever she proposes to our faith, for only in that faith can we work

out our salvation. But that our faith may lead to salvation, it must, as we shall point out to-day, have three qualities. It must be—

I. Universal;
II. Firm;
III. Living.

PART I.

Our faith must be *universal;* that is, we must believe all that the Catholic Church proposes to our belief and not a portion only. It is not, it is true, necessary for us to know in particular and believe explicitly all the truths of faith, because to do this more than an ordinary knowledge of religion and theology would be required; but it is absolutely necessary for us to believe implicitly all that the Church teaches; or, in other words, we must be disposed and prepared to accept with unquestioning trust all the dogmas and articles of faith held as such and taught by the Church. That this universal faith is necessary for salvation, the Sacred Scripture teaches; for Christ said to his Apostles: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." —*Matt.* 28: 19, 20. If the Apostles were obliged to teach all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them, it necessarily follows that we must believe and observe all things whatsoever they have preached; because the obligation laid on the Apostles to preach to us and to teach us implied and carried with it the obligation on our part to hear and believe what they taught, that is, their obligation to preach was at the same time our obligation to hear. Besides, Christ said to his Apostles: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you can not bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, he will teach you all truth and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I have said unto you." Therefore the Apostles insisted with unyielding firmness upon the faithful reception of the entire Christian doctrine. They declared in the clearest terms that those who depart from the doctrine of Christ, even in one point, can have no part with God. St. John says: "Whosoever revolteth and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God."—*II. John* 1: 9. St. Paul writes: "Behold, I Paul tell you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."—*Gal.* 5: 2. One would think that circumcision was no great matter, and that if the Galatians held in other respects to the doctrine of Christ, this Jewish custom might have been overlooked in them, as a sort of innocent reminiscence of the customs of their forefathers. But no, the Apostle declares with inflexible severity, that, if in this one point they departed from the doctrine of Christ, they would lose all the graces of Christianity.

2. *The holy Fathers.* St. Ambrose says: "If you take away one single article of the faith, you forfeit your salvation." The Emperor Valens, who professed the Arian heresy, endeavored to persuade St. Basil, through his governor, Medestus, to yield to the force of circumstances and attach himself to Arianism, as it was only a question of a few articles of the faith. St. Basil replied with unbending firmness: "What the Church teaches, she has received from God; with my blood I will abide by this doctrine. Not a word, nay, not even a syllable, will I allow to be taken away. I shall stand firm as a guardian of truth, and defend at the peril of my life the deposit of faith against every attack of heresy."

3. *Reason.* All the truths of faith rest on the basis of the revelation of God, who is the eternal, infallible Truth. He, then, who rejects one iota of revealed truth denies what God declares true. Our ultimate reason for believing anything that the Church teaches, is simply because God himself taught it to the Church. It is plain, then, that one may as well deny all, as any one of the articles of faith; for each and all rest on the self same foundation. We have the same reason for believing one as the other, namely, the authority of God; and if he could reveal, that is, teach, as true what is not true on any one point, he might have done so on any other or on all. We should no longer have any guarantee for his veracity, and all revelation would be only a jumble of error and untruth. To deny an article of faith, therefore, is to deny that we can believe God on his own word. But is it not to offer the greatest insult to God, and to blaspheme him, to call into doubt or deny his veracity? Must not God punish such a blasphemer with everlasting damnation? Strictly speaking, a man that rejects one article of faith, can not be said to have any faith at all. Since he accepts only what pleases him, he does not believe God, but himself; he places his reason and his will above the revelation of God, and consequently renders faith impossible. For to believe is to hold as true what God has revealed, *because he has revealed it.* Hence St. Augustine says: "If in the gospel you believe only what you will and do not believe what you will not, you believe yourself rather than the gospel. For if one's own understanding is allowed to receive and reject in the Scripture what it will, it does not subject itself to the authority of the Scripture, but subjects the Scripture to its will." You must, therefore, believe everything that the Catholic Church proposes to your faith as a divinely revealed truth, whether you comprehend it or not, whether it appear to you more or less important, whether it agree or disagree with your notions. He who would reject a single truth taught as of faith by the Church, for example, the infallibility of the Pope, the divine institution and necessity of auricular con-

fession, or the Immaculate Conception, would sin grievously against faith, and unless he repented, would perish eternally.

PART II.

Our faith must be *firm*, that is,

1. We must believe without doubting in the least. Faith admits of no doubt. What we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, touch with our hands, is not so sure and certain as the divinely revealed truths which the Church proposes to our belief. Hence St. Augstine says: "I would sooner doubt that I live, than doubt the truth of that which I have heard from the Church, the teacher of divine truths. The doctrine of faith is based upon the testimony of God, who is the eternal, infallible Truth."

Say not: I do not doubt this or that doctrine as doubting God's word. I should not dream of doubting the word of God. But how am I to be assured that God has taught this or that doctrine which I am asked to believe? How foolish is this question. The only question is, does the Church teach it? If she does, then it is revealed. God taught it to the Church. She can teach nothing as of faith but what has been revealed. Has not Christ promised her his assistance and that of the Holy Ghost until the end of time, so that she can teach nothing but divine truth, and in matters of faith never fall into error? A doubt as to whether any doctrine is true or false can exist only so long as we do not know with certainty whether it is proposed by the Church to our faith. If we be certain that the Church teaches it, every doubt must cease; for just as it is impossible for God to err or speak an untruth, so it is impossible for the Church to err in matters of faith. If by believing the Church we could be led into error, our error should be laid to the door of Christ himself, who, under the threat of eternal damnation, commands us to hear his Church: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17.

Never dwell upon doubts of faith. If such arise in your mind turn from them at once, make an act of faith, and protest to our Lord, that, by the help of his holy grace, you are determined to live and die in his holy Church.

2. *We must be prepared to lose everything, even life itself, rather than our faith.* Faith is the first requisite for salvation; without it we have no part in Christ, without it we cannot be saved. For this reason faith must be to us an inestimable treasure, which we must never barter at any price. If we could not preserve our faith otherwise than by the loss of our possessions, liberty, nay, life itself, we should readily make the sacrifice. Church history

furnishes us with countless examples of such firmness and constancy. For three hundred years the Christian faith was forbidden as a crime punishable with death, and no torture that the malignant ingenuity of tyranny could invent was spared the hunted Christians. Their property was confiscated, they were sent into banishment, were cast into dismal prisons where they languished in the greatest misery, were sold into slavery where a life worse than death awaited them; they were mutilated, their entrails were torn out of their bodies, they were beaten with scourges; boiling pitch, oil, and lead were poured into their mouths; they were tortured with red-hot irons and torches, and were burned upon funeral piles; they were cast to wild beasts, dragged over stones and broken glass, their tongues were cut out, they were flayed alive, cut and quartered, in a word, their enemies hunted them down with more zeal and ferocity than they would wild beasts or poisonous reptiles, and subjected them to the most inhuman tortures and cruel deaths. And these Christians might easily have escaped their terrible fate. They need only have renounced their faith. A word, a signal, or movement of any kind, indicating such purpose, and they would have been, not only safe, but greeted with applause. But the words of their Lord and Master were ringing in their ears: "He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father, who is in heaven" (*Matt.* 10: 33); they would rather sacrifice everything, and cling to their faith, and so save their immortal souls. You also must be firm in your faith. You must be willing to suffer contempt, contumely, mockery, slander, detraction, and every other evil for it, and esteem yourselves happy, with the Apostles, if on account of your attachment to the Church you are reviled and persecuted. On all proper occasions show that you are Catholics; be not ashamed of your faith; confess courageously, in word and deed, that you esteem the possession of this faith as the greatest honor, privilege, and happiness of your life; and let all men see that you are ready to suffer and, if need be, to die for it.

Part III.

Faith must be *living:* that is, we must live according to the precepts of the faith; therefore we must avoid evil and do good.

1. *Without this living faith we cannot be saved.* So Christ expressly teaches us: "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 7: 21. The Apostle teaches the same, saying: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor un-

circumcision: but faith that worketh by charity."—*Gal*, 5: 6. If faith is not animated by charity, it resembles a body without a soul; it is dead. Faith without works is dead, as the body without the spirit is dead. With such a dead faith we can not please God and be saved. Therefore the Apostle says: "If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."—*I. Cor.* 13: 2. And St. James: "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? No," the Apostle answers, "faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself."—*James* 2: 14-17. St. Gregory the Great very appropriately says: "As he who wishes to go to a certain place needs two things to obtain his object, namely, feet and eyes, so he who wishes to go to heaven must have the eye of faith and the feet of works."

You may be the best kind of a Catholic so far as faith is concerned, yet you will be rejected if you do not live as your faith commands; "the devils also believe and tremble."—*James* 2: 19. It will not suffice before the judgment-seat of God to say: "I am a Catholic;" we must also be able to say: "I have lived as a Catholic." In vain do we believe that "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God" (*I Cor.* 6: 9, 10), unless we avoid those sins and vices. In vain do we believe that in order to be saved we must be humble, meek, patient, merciful, unless we practice those virtues. In vain do we believe that prayer, the hearing of the Word of God, the reception of the sacraments, the frequent thought of God, are necessary means for the obtaining of life everlasting, if we neglect these means.

2. *Faith, if it be not living, is calculated not only to deprive us of our salvation, but it even increases the severity of our sentence.* It is true that all who through their own fault have not the faith will be condemned; but the hell of Catholics will be more severe, because they defile the true faith by a criminal life. Abbot Macarius, on his journey through the desert, found a human skull. As he touched it with his staff, it received life and speech. Macarius asked it: "Who art thou?" The skull answered: "I am the head of a pagan priest and once dwelt in this desert." Macarius asked again: "What is your fate in the other world?" The head answered: "I am damned, because I did not obey the voice of my conscience and try to come to the knowledge of the true God." The Saint asked once more: "How is it with Christians?—are any of them damned?" "Oh, yes," replied the skull, "of them there is a great multitude; but they are far below us pagans, and are tormented more cruelly than we." Macarius then buried the skull. Now, it matters not whether this legend be true or only fictitious;

this much is certain, that a far worse fate is in store for bad Catholics in the other world than for heathens, because they knew God far better and possessed far more graces and means of salvation. Therefore Christ himself says: "That servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shalt be beaten with few stripes." —*Luke* 12: 47, 48.

PERORATION.

These are the three qualities which faith must have, that it may please God and lead to salvation, it must be universal, firm, and living. Let it be your earnest endeavor that your faith possess these three qualities. Believe everything that the Catholic Church proposes to your belief, no matter whether you comprehend it or not, whether it suits your notions or not. Let no voluntary doubts arise in your mind. Stand firm by your faith, for what the Church teaches is the Word of God. Guard that faith as the most precious boon of heaven, and let it not be shaken by the mockery of men or by persecution. If you lose your faith, you lose all. Live according to it, avoid everything sinful, and fulfil conscientiously the duties of your religion and state of life. If your faith has these qualities, you have the saving faith, and Christ's words will be fulfilled in you: "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life."—*John* 6: 4-7. Amen.

SUNDAY BETWEEN NEW YEAR'S DAY AND EPIPHANY.

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4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE THREE KINGS' BLESSING.

[*Local usage.*]

The Holy Family return from Egypt into their own country and dwell at Nazareth. In this poor, despised village Jesus lived up to his thirtieth year, and hence received the name of the Nazarite. This hidden life of Christ teaches us the lesson that great things thrive in solitude, and that we also should love solitude and

avoid intercourse with the frivolous world as much as possible. In communication with it we easily forget God and our eternal destiny; we become thoughtless and careless, lose our good principles, and defile our conscience with various sins. This applies particularly to young persons: they should imitate the hidden life of Christ and lead a retired life; only by so doing will they be protected from vice and immorality. Although Christ led a hidden life for thirty years, still to some he manifested even then his Divinity and dignity as the Messias. Shortly after his birth he called, by means of a miraculous star, the sages of the East to his crib, and manifested himself to them as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. We shall celebrate that mystery this week. Nearly all the great feasts have a vigil or eve; the Epiphany has one. The eve is a day of preparation for the ensuing day's festival. The ceremonies, office, and mass of the eve are naturally connected with and refer to those of the feast. On the eve of the Epiphany we have that special blessing of water to which the name of the Three Kings' Blessing has been given. Of this blessing I shall speak to-day, answering the two following questions:

I. Who instituted this blessing?
II. How is it performed?

PART I.

This blessing of water on the vigil of the Epiphany dates back to the earliest ages of Christianity, for the ancient Fathers of the Church mention it. St. Chrysostom says: "This is the day on which Jesus Christ was baptized, and sanctified the nature of water. Therefore, on this feast, towards midnight, all draw water, and after being immersed in it, carry it to their own house and preserve it for the whole year, because it was blessed on this day."

Why then was this blessing ordained?

1. As at Easter and Pentecost, so on the feast of the Epiphany, the catechumens, or newly converted, were baptized. The Church loved to administer the Sacrament of Baptism on this festival, because this was the day on which God called the Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ. Now, as the Church on the vigils of Easter and Pentecost blessed the baptismal water for the purpose of solemn baptism, so she also blessed water on the vigil of the Epiphany for the solemn baptism of the newly converted on the feast itself. This may be one reason why she ordained this blessing.

2. Another reason is found in the events which the feast is designed to commemorate. These are three: First, the call of the wise men from the East to adore the new-born King amid his lowly surroundings in Bethlehem; secondly, the marriage feast at Cana, where Christ changed water into wine; and thirdly, the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist in the waters of the Jordan. It is to the latter mystery chiefly that this blessing owes its introduction. When Christ was baptized in the Jordan he purified and sanctified the water that it might become a fit means for purifying man from every stain of sin in the Sacrament of Baptism, and of sanctifying and transforming us into children of God. Hence St. Augustine says: "We read that the Jews, according to the Law, had various ablutions, but none could afford a universal remedy against the evil of sin. The water needed heavenly sanctification for the purification of the whole world. And as throughout the whole world baptism was necessary to the human race, Christ blessed all water, when in ineffable humility he descended into the river Jordan; for the water did not purify Christ the Lord, but he purified the water." The Church, by the blessing of water, intends to bring before our minds this purifying and sanctifying power which Christ, by his baptism in the Jordan, communicated to water. By the exorcism, which is pronounced at the blessing of the water, it is purified and withdrawn from the influences of the evil spirit, and by the prayers which follow the exorcism it is sanctified and restored to the original state of its purity, as it proceeded from the hand of God. In like manner we are purified by baptism and delivered from the servitude ofSatan; at the same time we are sanctified and restored to the state of innocence in which God created the first man. The feast of the Epiphany is celebrated in thanksgiving for the call of the Gentiles into the Christian fold, while water, the water of baptism, is the gate through which ingress is obtained. Thus the blessing of the water stands in the most intimate connection with the feast of the Epiphany.

3. Lastly, the Three Kings' blessing was ordained as a *proper preparation for the solemnity of the Epiphany of our Lord.* As this feast calls to our mind the great grace of our vocation to the Christian faith, we should endeavor to celebrate it in a becoming manner; this we shall do if we purify ourselves from all stains of sin, renew ourselves interiorly, and in our life and conduct become conformable to our divine Saviour. He who celebrates the feast of the Epiphany with a conscience defiled by sin, shows himself unworthy of his Christian vocation. The blessing of water by the Church on the vigil of the Epiphany reminds us that we should do for our soul what is done for the water by this blessing. As the water is withdrawn from the influence of

the evil spirit, purified and sanctified, so we should purify our hearts by penance from all sin and evil inclinations, and prepare them as a worthy habitation for our Saviour. Only in this way shall we celebrate this feast worthily.

PART II.

How is the Three Kings' blessing performed?

1. The priest begins the blessing by reciting *three psalms*, in which David glorifies the Lord for the power and majesty which he manifests in nature, then for the victory granted him over his enemies, and lastly, for protection in all the perils of life. In a spiritual sense, these three psalms refer to the graces which we receive in the Catholic Church. There the power and majesty of God are revealed by the word of God, announced by the priest, moving the sinner and arousing him from the sleep of sin; there Christ continually obtains victories over hell by leading unbelievers to faith, by breaking the bonds of sin, by strengthening the weak and comforting the just; there he protects us against all the enemies of our salvation.

2. The psalms are followed by the *Litany of the Saints*. The consideration that we are members of the Catholic Church naturally leads us to think of our glorified brethren who have already passed from the Church militant to the Church triumphant. Since we know that we also are called to enjoy with them heavenly felicity, we love to tarry in spirit even now in their society, but remembering our weakness and sinfulness, and the dangers to which our salvation is exposed, we ask their intercession, that we may one day be united with them in the kingdom of God's glory.

3. After the Litany the *actual blessing* begins. The priest reads several exorcisms and prayers over the water, to deliver it from the curse of sin and remove from it everything pernicious, and to give it the power of being for the faithful a remedy against all evils arising from nature or the evil spirit. In this blessing is expressed the truth that by the Christian religion not only man, but also nature, is purified and sanctified. The oft-repeated sign of the cross which the priest makes over the water betokens the same truth, for it signifies that everything in nature, as well as the soul of man, receives salvation only through Jesus Christ, who redeemed us by his death on the cross.

4. *The priest mingles blessed salt with the water.* This also is significant. Salt possesses the virtue of preserving meat and other things from putrefaction; the mixture of salt and water

teaches us to preserve ourselves from spiritual putrefaction (sin), after having been purified and sanctified. For after having been justified by the merits of Christ, a Christian should guard against nothing more than a relapse into his former sinful ways, and a defilement of his soul with the leprosy of sin.

5. *The priest sprinkles some of the water towards the four winds*, to remind us, not only of the fountain in Paradise which sent forth four streams, but also of the baptismal font, from which flow grace and salvation to the four regions of the earth; for baptism is intended for all the nations of the earth, and every one who receives it is purified and sanctified.

6. *The priest next touches the water with his hand*, thereby signifying that, as natural water cleanses the hands and the body from filth, so the baptismal water, in virtue of the merits of Christ, takes away all stains of the soul, according to the words of our Lord: "I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness."—*Ezech.* 36: 25.

7. *The priest then lowers a cross into the water.* This ceremony reminds us of Jesus Christ, who descended into the river Jordan and was baptized by John, as well as of the purifying and sanctifying virtue of the baptismal water, which Christ communicated to it by his baptism.

8. A few more exorcisms and prayers are read for the purpose of applying to the faithful the salutary effects of the blessed water. Then the priest, reciting the antiphon *Asperges*, sprinkles the faithful with the blessed water, that all may receive the graces which have been prayed for when blessing it.

8. The whole ceremony is concluded with the *Te Deum*, which the priest says in thanksgiving for the grace of our regeneration in the laver of water through the word of life, and our reception into the bosom of the Catholic Church.

PERORATION.

Thus the Three Kings' blessing with its ceremonies represents to us our vocation to Christianity and the grace of baptism. Wording the thoughts which it suggests, this blessing may be said to address us thus: Oh, Christian, call to mind the great proof of love which your Lord and Saviour has given you by withdrawing you from blind, unhappy paganism, by purifying aud sanctifyng you, and by making you members of his Church. In this Church are deposited his infinite merits; here you receive the forgiveness of

your sins and are enriched with every grace to enable you to fight the good fight and to obtain the crown of victory. Frequently return thanks to your Saviour for the happiness of making you members of his Church, but endeavor to be always worthy members. Walk in the light of faith and observe conscientiously the precepts of the Church, that as good children of that Church you may work out your salvation. Amen.

SUNDAY BETWEEN NEW YEAR'S DAY AND EPIPHANY.

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5. LITURGICAL AND SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE BLESSING OF HOUSES ON THE EVE OF THE EPIPHANY.

[*Local usage.*]

The house in which the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived the Son of God by the Holy Ghost, and in which the Holy Family lived for many years, is still existing. Angels carried it, in the year 1291, from Nazareth to Dalmatia, and thence, in the year 1294, to a place where the city of Loretto, in Italy, now stands. It is at present known as "the holy house of Loretto." Over this house has been erected a magnificent church, which is visited every year by multitudes of pilgrims. This house is called "Santa Casa," Holy House, and justly so, for it was inhabited by the holiest of persons, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Your houses must also be holy, for you are Christians, and as such are called to sanctity. Of this you are reminded by the blessing of houses on the eve of the Epiphany, which is done either by a priest or by one of the inmates. Concerning this blessing of houses I shall speak to you to-day and explain—

I. What it signifies, and
II. What it effects.

PART I.

What it signifies.

1. *The houses are fumed with blessed incense.*

(*a.*) *Incense is the symbol of devout prayer ascending to heaven.* We read in the Apocalypse: "And another angel came, and stood

before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel."—*Apoc.* 8: 3, 4. For as smoke ascends towards heaven, so devout prayer ascends to the throne of God, is heard, and obtains for us grace: "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh he will not be comforted; and he will not depart till the Most High behold."—*Ecclus.* 35: 21. The incensing of the houses, then, is an admonition to us to say *our prayers at home daily, and with devotion.* In the houses of some devout people all the members of the household assemble three times a day for family devotions—morning, noon, and evening. Many pious fathers and mothers hold firmly to this truly Catholic custom, and never suffer it to be omitted. The people of a house constitute one family and for this reason they should pray together. Prayer in common has this advantage, that God will more certainly hear it than the prayer of an individual, for Christ says: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—*Matt.* 18: 20. You should not omit family devotions, because there is reason to fear that young people, naturally thoughtless as they are, and with little attraction to prayer, would neglect it altogether. Moreover, see that all conduct themselves devoutly, and do not suffer any one to talk, laugh, or otherwise behave indecorously. Prayer is a holy exercise, and should be performed with reverence and devotion. "Cursed is he who doeth the work of God deceitfully." Not only the sitting-room, or the room in which people are generally assembled during the day, but also the bed-rooms, kitchen, dining-room, and parlor are incensed, as also the cellars, pantry, stables, and barns. This teaches us that we can and should pray everywhere, for God is everywhere; he sees and hears us everywhere, and everywhere we need his grace and protection; consequently we can and may pray to him in all places. Examples: The patriarch Jacob prayed in the field; Daniel in the lions' den; the three youths, Ananias, Azarius, Misael, in the fiery furnace; and Jonas in the whale's belly. I do not say that you should always have your beads or prayer-book in your hands, or be on your knees everywhere, in stable, barn, kitchen, or bed-room. God sees into your heart and knows every thought. Pray with the heart, think of God at your work, and recommend yourselves, soul and body, to his protection. Pray during the night when you can not sleep.

(*b.*) The incense reminds us of the words of the Apostle: "We are the good odor of Christ into God in them that are saved, and

in them that perish."—*II. Cor.* 2: 15. As the incense, wherever it penetrates, spreads a good odor, so the inmates of a house should spread the good odor of pious conduct, and edify every one by their example, whether in the sitting-room, kitchen, bedroom, shop, stable, or barn. This regards the father and mother in particular, who ought to be patterns in all things to those under their charge, and, as the Apostle enjoins: "Be an example of the faithful in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity."—*I. Tim.* 4: 12. If parents conduct themselves as good Christians, their children and servants will follow their good example, for as the shepherd is, so is the flock. What sad consequences follow when parents and superiors lead unchristian lives! They become a scandal and stumbling-block to children and dependants and that terrible woe with which Christ threatens those who give scandal will fall upon them with a double weight.

2. After the houses have been fumed with blessed insense, they are sprinkled with the newly blessed water.

(*a.*) Water is the principal factor in every kind of material purification. The sprinkling of the houses with the blessed water is accordingly symbolic of the required *purity of heart, to which the inmates should ever aspire.* The houses which are sprinkled with holy water are henceforth to be Christian homes, and consequently Christian virtue and the fear of God, not sin and vice, should dwell therein. Nothing is more revolting to a Christian of refinement and good taste than an untidy, dirty house, and on beholding such a one, he is apt to form a low estimate of the owner's character. "Cleanliness is next to godliness," says the proverb. But how much more reprehensible and disgusting is it to see the mire of sin and the filth of dissipation and vice settled in the recesses of a Christian home? Must not God, the Most Holy, avert his eyes, rather than look down upon such houses? How can the angels, to whom every sin is an abomination, dwell in such houses? Keep a clean house, and never soil with sin and vice the places in which you work, pray, eat, or sleep, and where, sooner or later, you will die. Defile not your houses with curses, imprecations, and blasphemies, with unchaste discourses and songs, nor with impure acts. Fathers and mothers, reflect that the blessing of God departs from houses in which sin and vice reign.

(*b.* The sprinkling of houses with blessed water reminds us also of *baptism,* by which we have been cleansed from every stain of sin, and spiritually regenerated and sanctified. You are admonished by this simple ceremony to preserve carefully your

baptismal grace, or to recover it by a speedy repentance, if you have been so unfortunate as to lose it by mortal sin. Since the Sacrament of Penance is the best means of preserving innocence, as well as of recovering it again if lost, you should, when your house is sprinkled with the blessed water, resolve to confess frequently during the year. Parents, herein you must again give good example to your children.

3. After the incensing and sprinkling of the houses it is customary to write down *the number of the new year* on the doors.

(*a.*) Why is the number of the new year inscribed on doors, etc., on the eve of the Epiphany, and not before? One would think that since our era dates from the birth of Christ, the number of the new year should be set down on Christmas Day. Or, if not on Christmas Day, why not on the first day of January, when the civil year begins? The reason why it is not written on the first day of January is that Christian customs and traditions have no connection with the civil year. Christ was not born on the first of January. Neither do we inscribe the year on Christmas Day, because, though he was born on that day, it was, as it were, only for the Jews as yet, and not for the Gentiles that he was born. It was only on the feast of the Epiphany that he may be said to have been born for the Gentiles; then he called the Gentile nations in the persons of the three Wise Men from the East, and manifested himself to them as the Redeemer of the world. And as we are descendants of the Gentiles, Christ was, so to say, born for us on that feast. This is the reason why, on the eve of the Epiphany, and not before, we inscribe the number of the new year.

(*b.*) We add to the number of the year the three letters, C. M. B. These are the initials of the names of the three holy kings, Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar. These initials are added to the number of the year: first, to remind us that these were the first who were called from Paganism to Christianity, and consequently are fathers in the faith: and secondly, to admonish us to imitate them in the zeal with which they sought Jesus, in the veneration and humility with which they adored him, and in the love and affection with which they offered him the best they had. We append to the three letters three little crosses. thus: C † M † B †, as memorials of the cross on which Jesus Christ died for our redemption. We put the cross on the doors, where every one can see it, and confess thereby that our houses are Christian homes, that with all that belongs to us we will serve our Lord, and will glory in nothing but in the cross of Jesus Christ "by whom the world is crucified to us, and we to the world." The sign of the cross on the door admonishes us also, when we

go in or out, to take holy water and sign ourselves with the sign of the cross, and when we enter another house, to repeat devoutly the ancient Catholic salutation: "Peace to this house."

PART II.

I have explained the symbolic meaning of the blessing of the houses on the eve of the Epiphany. I shall now speak of—

The effects of the blessing.

1. The incensing of the house has a salutary effect. The incense that is used is not common incense, but incense blessed by the Church. It is a sacramental, used in union with the prayer of the Church. Now, as all sacramentals have the virtue of averting certain evils from us, and of imparting to us various graces and benefits, there can be no doubt that the incense used possesses such a virtue. This is evident from the prayer accompanying the blessing, for the Church prays that God will bless, dedicate, and sanctify the incense, and communicate to it the gift of his blessing, that every one that is incensed therewith may be kept from all danger of soul and body. If therefore the inmates perform the incensing of their house with faith and confidence, and strive to lead a virtuous life, we may trust that God will take them and their house under his special protection, deliver them from misfortune and danger, and give them his divine blessing.

2. The same may be said of the blessed water, or holy water, with which the houses are sprinkled. This again is apparent from the exorcisms and prayers which are made use of in blessing it: "O God, who for the salvation of mankind hast created the greatest sacraments in the substance of water, be propitious to our invocations, and infuse into this element prepared by many purifications the virtue of thy blessing, that this thy creature (water) may, in the service of thy mysteries, in the banishing of evil spirits, in the removing of sickness, receive the effect of divine grace, that whatever is sprinkled in the houses or places of the faithful with this water may be free from all impurity and danger, that no pernicious spirit or injurious air may dwell there, that whatever is detrimental to the welfare and peace of the faithful may depart thence, through the sprinkling of this water."

It is not superstitious for you to carry some of this water to your homes and to sprinkle with it your houses, barns, stables, and fields. This water, by virtue of the blessing of the Church, has the power to avert danger from you and yours and obtain

for you the blessing of God. Use it with confidence, with a pure, or at least penitent heart, that you may experience its salutary effects.

3. Writing the year of the Christian era has also its meaning. We add to the letters C., M., B., the number of the current year. Now, we are taught by the word of God, that the saints in heaven care for us, and that their prayers with God, whose friends they are, avail much. If, therefore, you venerate the three holy kings whose names are on the doors, and if, going in and out, you recommend yourselves to their intercession, you may confidently hope that they will protect you and obtain for you and your houses many blessings by their prayers. But it is particularly in the sign of the cross, which is added to the number of the year, that you must place all your trust. All good gifts and graces come from the Triune God, in whose honor and praise you mark the three crosses on your doors, and from the merits of Jesus Christ crucified, of whom the sign of the cross reminds you. The cross is, as it were, the shield that will defend you against all the attacks of your visible and invisible enemies, a fountain from which the blessings of heaven flow in abundance. St. Chrysostom says: "The cross has become terrible, not only to the spirits of the abyss, but to corrupt inclinations. The fiery passions, lusts, and desires, envy, hatred, and revenge, are subdued by the holy sign of the cross. They tremble before the cross like rebellious slaves before the lash."

PERORATION.

As you see, the blessing of houses on the eve of the Epiphany is not only instructive, but calculated to produce salutary effects. It has reference to the mystery which we celebrate on this feast, and represents to us the grace of our vocation to Christianity. But it reminds us also of the duties which as Christians we must fulfil if we wish to obtain our end. Give thanks to God to-day that from your infancy he has called you to his Catholic Church: resolve anew to be always faithful children of our holy Mother the Church and conscientiously obey her precepts. To believe as Catholics and to live as Catholics—this is the way that leads to heaven. Amen.

SUNDAY BETWEEN NEW YEAR'S DAY AND EPIPHANY.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

Who arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.—Matt. 2: 21.

Jesus is scarcely born when Herod forms the design to kill him. With this intention he requests the Wise Men from the East to inquire diligently after the child, and to make known to him his dwelling-place. But his design is thwarted; for the Wise Men went back another way into their own country. Then he ordered all the male children of Bethlehem and its neighborhood, of two years old and under, to be slain, confidently believing that the divine Child could not escape. But how much he was mistaken! The Infant Jesus, on whose account the wretch caused such a terrible slaughter, is not among the slain: he lives peacefully and securely in Egypt. Herod has spent his rage; the bloodthirsty monster can shed no more blood—he is dead. The Holy Family return into the land of Israel, and by the command of God choose Nazareth, that despised village, for their dwelling-place. Jesus lives here till his thirtieth year, when he begins his public life, in order to accomplish the work of our Redemption.

In this biblical account we see clearly the wonderful Providence of God—

I. As regards the good.
II. As regards the wicked.

PART I.

Yes, wonderful are the ways of divine Providence in dealing with the good, for he frequently leads them in a manner quite different from what we might expect.

1. *He warns them against danger without warding off the danger.* If we see a dear friend in some difficulty or danger, and are in a

condition to aid him, we do so at once. God is almighty; there is no danger, no difficulty, from which he can not deliver us. He loves the good and watches over them as the apple of his eye. But strange to say he frequently does not avert impending dangers, but contents himself with merely giving warning of their coming. We see this in the event mentioned in the gospel of to-day. The Infant Jesus is in danger. Herod means to kill him. How does God act? Does he remove the danger by depriving Herod of his throne, or arresting his uplifted arm by death? No, he merely sends an angel to Joseph, who says: "Herod seeks the life of the child; therefore flee." This is God's way. Thus Jesus warned the faithful against the danger which threatened them at the destruction of Jerusalem, by his prophecy and the various wonderful signs which preceded that terrible catastrophe. We live in a time whose ominous threatenings may well make us fear the worst in the near future. Wars, revolutions, persecutions of the Church, as in the first centuries, are in prospect. God does not remove these dangers; he only indicates them by signs, which do not permit us to doubt that they will come to pass.

Why does God act in this manner? Assuredly, because it is in accordance with his wisdom and most salutary for us. We may assign a twofold reason for this conduct on the part of God. If we know the dangers to which we are exposed, but find ourselves unable to remove them, does is not inspire us with humility? Must we not, feeling our weakness, exclaim: "Oh, my God, what impotent creatures we are, since we can not help ourselves in the least." This humility is certainly of great advantage, since it guards us against all inordinate self-confidence, and compels us to seek refuge in God. Secondly, the knowledge of the danger is an incentive for us to make use of the means with which reason, prudence, and religion furnish us, and this again is useful and salutary.

2. *He delays assistance.* He who gives quickly gives doubly, says the adage; but God does not always act according to this adage. We have a proof of this in the gospel of to-day. The Holy Family was obliged to spend years in Egypt; to live in abandonment, destitution, and misery, before the angel revealed to Joseph that it was God's will that he should return into his own country. God does the same to-day. Holy Church has been sorely persecuted for many a year; the Holy Father is deprived of his patrimony and compelled to live as a prisoner in Rome; many religious orders have been suppressed; bishops and priests are trammeled in the performance of their lawful duties; the faithful are reviled, oppressed, and persecuted; the downfall of the Church is aimed at, and God still tarries; there is not a ray of

light in the heavens to give hope that the storm will pass over. Why does God act in this manner? For the good of his children. Afflictions and sufferings are the best means of expiating temporal punishments due to sin; they banish worldliness from the heart, revive Christian fervor, and afford a good opportunity of practicing many virtues, such as patience, meekness, love of our enemies, confidence in God; therefore it is clear that they are of a salutary nature.

3. *He often sends help when is it least expected.* We frequently appoint the time beforehand when we shall do a person a favor. We say: "Yes, I shall do it at once, or to-morrow; in a week it shall be done." Not so God. He assures us frequently in Holy Writ that he will hear our prayer and help us in our necessities; but not once does he appoint the time when he will do so. Usually God's assistance comes quite unexpectedly. The gospel narrates an instance exactly to the point: Mary and Joseph, with the divine Child, in obedience to the divine mandate, go down into Egypt; many times the seasons come and go in their accustomed succession, and the Holy Family live on in utter ignorance of the inscrutable designs of God. One evening they retire to rest, as they have done so many times before, without the least suspicion or expectation that anything unusual was about to occur. But they have spent their last day in Egypt. Whilst the night was in the midst of her course, an angel appeared to Joseph, saying: "Arise and take the Child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel." And at last their long exile, with all its inconveniences and hardships, is ended.

It was thus God always acted, and still acts, as may be readily gathered from the history of the Church and the lives of the saints. The period of trials and tribulations is sometimes of a longer, sometimes of a shorter duration, but finally, God always helps and delivers us and generally quite unexpectedly. Just when the necessity is most pressing God's aid is frequently close to us. In a certain sense it may be said that man's extremity is God's opportunity. In Rome the persecutions against the early Christians had lasted nearly three hundred years. The Emperor Diocletian was making his final exertions, having sworn to destroy the Chrstian name from the face of the earth. In the midst of the universal carnage which caused their blood to flow in torrents, the Christians had every reason to cry: "Lord, save us; we perish." It was then, in the gloomiest hour of the Christian people, when things seemed at the very worst with them, when there appeared no avenue of escape from the world-wide and merciless power which clutched them in its deadly grasp—it was then that the banner of Constantine was seen approaching in

the distance, the famous *Labarum*, emblazoned with the sign of the cross and glistening in the noonday sun. Maxentius awaited him with his legions marshaled in battle array along the banks of the Tiber. His troops were broken up, dispersed and cut to pieces; Maxentius endeavored to cross the Tiber, but the bridge gave way beneath the weight and multitude of the fugitives, and the guilty Emperor sunk into its red waters to rise no more. On the following day, October 29th, 312, Constantine made his solemn entry into Rome and proclaimed Christianity as the religion of the empire. The persecution of the Irish race for their religion is perhaps unparalleled in the annals of history. Their enemies could "drive them into Connaught," but never into hell by apostasy. So also the present tribulations and trials of the Church will come to an end at a time when we least expect it. Faith still gilds the edges of the dark clouds.

We must not lose confidence. Let us persevere in patience and leave entirely to God when and how he will take the cross from our shoulders; he knows what is best for us, and at what time his assistance is most necessary and salutary for us.

Part II.

Wonderful also is the providence of God in dealing with the wicked, for he often acts quite differently from what in our short-sightedness we should naturally expect.

1. *He lets the wicked have their own way;* he allows them to perpetrate every sin and vice, and never hinders their free will. Were it in our power we would prevent the wicked from accomplishing their nefarious designs, and in preventing them we should do right; but God's ways are above our ways. He allows sinners to do all the mischief they please. In his avenging justice his accidental glory will be all the same. Thus he did not hinder Herod from killing so many innocent children at Bethlehem; Jesus, the divine Child, preferred rather to withdraw from his presence than put a stop to Herod's crimes. To-day, sins innumerable are committed, especially against justice and charity; men who have a short lease of power abuse it for the oppression and persecution of the innocent. God is powerful enough to prevent all this, but does not do so. Why? Does he possibly find pleasure in evil? To think this, even for a moment would be to blaspheme God, for he hates everything evil, beihg infinitely holy. Or is God indifferent to the well-being or misfortune of the good, that he allows them to be oppressed and persecuted by the wicked? No, on the contrary, he loves the good, as a father loves his children, and desires their happiness. Or does

he give the wicked liberty to do evil, that later they may become victims of his vindictive justice? By no means. "He wills not that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.—*II. Pet.* 3: 9. God permits evil because he has given free will to man: "God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hands of his own counsel. Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him."—*Ecclus.* 15. 14, 18. If God prevented every evil in the world, it would be equivalent to taking away man's free will; but if man had not the free exercise of his will, neither virtue nor vice could be imputed to him as of merit or demerit. Neither could heaven be given him hereafter as a reward, for without liberty of will there is no merit, and without merit no reward.

How foolish and thoughtless, then, are those who complain of God because he permits so many sins and vices in the world! They might as well say: Why does God permit me to live longer so that I may serve him and acquire merit? why does he not admit me at once into heaven? If the wicked man abuses his liberty of will, it is his concern, he will suffer for it severely enough; but it is our concern to use our free will for good, and merit for ourselves eternal salvation.

2. *God does not, however, permit the wicked man to attain his ends entirely.* Proof in point is Herod. He sought the life of the Child; for this reason he had recourse to base hypocrisy before the Wise Men of the East, for he told them they should diligently inquire after the Child, and let him know his place of residence, as he also wished to go and adore him. For this same reason he afterwards massacred so many innocent children at Bethlehem. But did he obtain his end? No. God permitted the crimes of Herod in order not to take from him his free will; but he did not allow him to accomplish his design; he could not hurt a hair of the Child Jesus' head.

How many like examples of this wonderful providence of God could be adduced! What did the infidels do in France about one hunded years ago, with a view to extirpate the Catholic faith? They spread godless writings broadcast over the land, in which everything that is sacred to a Christian was most shamefully misrepresented and ridiculed; wherever they had power they persecuted the priests and all faithful Catholics, confiscating their property, imprisoning them and bringing them to the guillotine; whoever gave shelter to a priest was doomed to death; religion was abolished and unbelief made a law of the land. The infidels gloried, for now they thought they had attained their end. But how they were deceived! After a few years the whole structure of unbelief, which they had erected with such pains and

labor and cruelty, tumbled down like a house built of cards, and the Church flourished more gloriously than before. Thus "God disappoints the deceitful practices of the wicked."—*Prov.* 10: 3.

We need not fear that the wicked will ever triumph over the good. Their glory lasts only a short while, and they can never completely attain the end of their unholy designs and schemes. This should be our comfort in all the trials and persecutions which the Church and her faithful followers have now to endure, and will have to endure till her divine mission is accomplished, and the close of her career on earth announced by the Archangel's trumpet.

3. *He causes good to result from evil.* It is in the power of man to do wrong, but he is not master of the consequences of the wrong he does. As soon as the evil is done, God begins to act, and directs that some good shall result therefrom. Herod, whose death the gospel of this day mentions, had slain hundreds of innocent children. This was a crime crying to heaven for vengeance. But, by the operation of God, did not good result from this evil? All these children now wear a martyr's crown in heaven; whereas many of them, if they had lived, might, with the majority of the unbelieving Jews, have been eternally lost. Moreover, by the massacre of these innocents it became known everywhere that the Saviour of the world was born, and this knowledge must have been a great comfort to all those who longed for the Redeemer. Many parents of the murdered children especially, having afterwards heard that it was for Christ's sake their little innocent ones were slain, may have come to believe in him as the promised Messias. Herod compelled the Holy Family to retire into Egypt. This was also a great sin. But we do not err in believing that the protracted sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt opened the eyes of many an idolater and brought him to the knowledge of the true God. We see therefore that God, in his infinite wisdom, can make good result from evil. How appropriately Joseph in Egypt could say to his brothers: "You thought evil against me, but God turned it into good."—*Gen.* 50: 20.

From this, however, it does not follow that we should sanction sin, and look upon it as something desirable; for sin is, and always will be, the greatest of evils, and every one who sins will one day suffer for it. Herod is eternally damned, though good resulted from his crimes. On the contrary, we must hate and detest sin above all things, because it is an evil so great in the eyes of God that it requires, as it were, his infinite power and wisdom to prevent its pernicious consequences, and draw good from it. We should therefore work with all our might against sin of all kinds, put a stop to its scandals, and edify our fellowmen by good example.

PERORATION.

How wonderful are the ways of God's providence. He does not ward off dangers from the good, he only warns them of their approach. Frequently he appears to have forgotten the just. He lets them, as it were, hang for some time on the cross, but finally sends them help, and often quite unexpectedly. He lets the wicked have their own way. He does not hinder them from abusing their free-will. He suffers them to scheme and to do evil. Yet he does not permit them to accomplish their designs, but on the contrary, causes good to proceed from their evil. Let us in every situation of life commit ourselves with confidence to God's wise and providential guidance, and let us always say with the Apostle: "We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good."—*Rom.* 8: 28. Amen.

SUNDAY BETWEEN NEW YEAR'S DAY AND EPIPHANY.

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7. MORAL SKETCH.

CHILDREN, LOVE YOUR PARENTS.

Who arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.—Matt. 2: 21.

Joseph had retired into Egypt for the purpose of withdrawing his Divine foster-child from the cruel persecution of Herod and saving his life. During his sojourn in Egypt he does for the holy Infant everything that a good father can do for his child. After the death of Herod an angel appears, and commands him to return into his own country. He obeys, takes the child and his mother and comes into the land of Israel. The flight of St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary, their sojourn in Egypt and their return into the land of Israel, remind us of the great care which pious parents take of their children, in order to protect them from their numerous enemies. Your welfare, children, is the tenderest object of your parents' care, for which you owe them your heartfelt gratitude; but since you are not able to thank them for it as they deserve, you should at least love them from the depth of your heart. In order to remind you of this duty, I shall explain—

I. Why, and
II. How children should love their parents.

PART I.

Children, love your parents; for you have the strongest motives for loving them, and no excuse whatever for refusing them your love.

1. *Motives for loving your parents:*

(*a*) *The instinct of nature prompts you to do so.* "Ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee; and the birds of the air, and they shall tell thee. Speak to the earth, and it shall answer thee, and the fishes of the sea shall tell."—*Job.* 12; 7-8. Not only domestic animals, but also wild beasts, display a tender feeling towards their parents. This instinct is imparted to them by the Creator. We observe the same in the little child that smiles upon its mother. Man being endowed with liberty can act against his natural impulse; but by so doing he degrades himself below the level of the brute, and makes himself a monster in God's creation.

(*b.*) We are commanded by the *natural law* to love our parents. The Gentiles recognized the law inscribed in their hearts. "We are never able," says Aristobolus, "to return sufficient thanks and love to God and our parents." Pliny the younger, during an eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, at the risk of his own life, saved his mother from being burned to death. Will you suffer the Gentiles to surpass you in this virtue? "He that afflicteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy."—*Prov.* 19: 26.

(*c.*) *Moreover, the law of God obliges children to love their parents.* In the Old Testament we read: "Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength; for the relieving of thy father shall not be forgotten."—*Ecclus.* 3: 14. It shall not be forgotten indeed: for to those who love their parents God has promised great rewards, while those who do not love them he has threatened with his curse and their ruin. "He that honoreth his father shall have joy in his own children; and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard."—*Ecclus.* 3: 6. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and that despiseth the labor of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it." —*Prov.* 30: 17. These blessings and curses of the Lord are no empty sounds; we find them corroborated in the history of the

Old Law by a multitude of examples. Think of Shem and Japhet, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, who loved their parents sincerely; they enjoyed in this world a long contented and happy life. Think also of Cain, Cham, Absalom, Ophni and Phinees, who caused their parents trouble and grief. Did not the curse of God overtake them? Did they not come to an unholy and unhappy end? God will deal with you according to your conduct towards your parents. If you sincerely love them, he will bless you, all will be well with you, and he will give you a long life; but if you refuse them your love, if you grieve and offend them, he will send you crosses and afflictions; he will curse you, everything will go wrong with you, and your life will not be long upon the earth.

You are Christians, however, and the *New Testament*, the Christian law, is your guide and rule. But in the New Testament the same duty is enjoined upon children as in the Old. The basis of Christianity is charity; he who is destitute of charity is a dead member of the Church. St. Paul declares that the gift of languages, of working miracles, and the charitable distribution of our worldly substance, and even martyrdom, will avail us nothing without charity. Although St. Paul in this passage speaks of the love of God, this does not alter the case, for what is said of the love of God may be said with equal truth of the love of our neighbor; for Christ says: "The second commandment is like to the first: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The love of our neighbor is the characteristic feature of a Christian, so that, according to St. John, the love of God is impossible without, and inseparable from, the love of our neighbor. "If any man say: I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar."—*I. John* 4: 20. Our holy religion commands us to love even our enemies, under the penalty of eternal death. "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that calumniate you."—*Matt.* 5: 44. Therefore, unless we observe this commandment we can have no hope of obtaining the forgiveness of our sins and life everlasting; for Christ says: "If you will not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven forgive you your sins."—*Mark* 11: 26.

Now draw the conclusion yourselves, ye sons and daughters. If the commandment to love our neighbor, nay, our enemy, is an indispensable condition of our salvation, how urgent must be the command to love our parents! Look upon Jesus on the cross, your model, whose example ought to be your rule. Does he not, when plunged into a sea of grief, remember his mother? does he not show his tender love and affection for her even in the midst of the agonies of death? He knows his end is fast approaching, he feels exhausted, aut his heart beats for his mother; he thinks of her grief and abandonment, and with the tender feelings of

an affectionate son he speaks from the cross to John the words: "Behold thy mother.—*John* 19: 27. Thus Jesus loved his mother. And, you sons and daughters, who call Christ your Lord and Master, and say a thousand times that you are his disciples and followers, have you no heart, no affection for your parents, can you refuse them your love? If that were possible you would be below the level of the brute, and would deserve to be destroyed from the face of the earth.

2. *The commandment to love your parents admits of no excuses.*

(*a.*) As, however, many children allege various causes in order to excuse their undutiful conduct towards their parents, I shall prove to you that the precept of loving your parents admits of no excuse. *Why should I love my parents? They do not love me, but always give the preference to my brothers and sisters.* This is a common complaint. Although I am not inclined to excuse those foolish parents who have their pet children, yet may it not be your bad conduct and not your person, that displeases your parents? Be candid; what is your conduct, ye sons and daughters, who complain of your parents being partial? Are you not stubborn, arrogant and disobedient? You follow your own will in everything; never do your parents' bidding; you grieve them by your levity, by keeping bad company; you stay out late against their will; you are careless in saying your prayers, in attending mass and receiving the sacraments—and you expect your parents to love you as they love your brothers and sisters who behave better. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons, because he was better than they; his other sons were wicked and blind enough to envy Joseph and to sell him as a slave into Egypt. Why did Jacob love Joseph more than all his other sons? Because he was an innocent, obedient child, whilst his brothers disobeyed their father and did many wicked things. Now, if Jacob's sons had said: We cannot love our father, because he loves Joseph more than us, because he gives the preference to Joseph, would their excuse have been well founded? Certainly not. They might have been told to do better in future, to change their conduct, to obey their father in all things, to be good children, to be as good as Joseph, and then their father world love them as much as he loved Joseph. I may say the same to those sons and daughters who say that they cannot love their parents because they give the preference to their brothers and sisters. Change your conduct, give up those evil habits by which you have heretofore grieved and offended your parents; obey them in all things and they will no longer make any distinction between you and your brothers and sisters.

Suppose, however, that your parents, without sufficient cause, do display no affection for you, the fourth commandment applies to you nothwithstanding. In such a case Christian charity demands that you should bear patiently their unjust dealing. In early Christian times it frequently occurred that parents delivered their own children to the executioner because they professed the Christian faith. These holy children avenged themselves by praying for the conversion of their cruel parents.

(*b.*) *It is impossible for me to love my parents,* I hear other children say, *for they neglected their duties towards me; they cared neither for my temporal nor eternal welfare, they neglected my education.* If this heavy charge be well founded, your parents have indeed grievously sinned, and great is their responsibility. But you must bear mind that the fourth commandment is not in the nature of a bargain or contract—if they love me I shall love them. No; it is direct, simple, unqualified—Honor thy father and thy mother. They will one day be obliged to render a rigorous account; whatever their shortcomings may have been, or may be, you are bound, to love them, as God your Father in heaven loves all men, and causes his sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, and sends rain upon the fields of the good and the bad.

PART II.

Children should love their parents *sincerely* and *actively*.

1. It is self-evident that a true filial love must spring from the depth of the heart. Otherwise it would be sheer hypocrisy. Absalom, who externally showed reverence for his father, had not one spark of love for him in his heart. A child that loves its parents sincerely rejoices when they are happy, and is sad when they are grief-stricken. Young Tobias gives you, my dear children, a beautiful example of this tender love. He could not be induced by Raguel, his father-in-law, to stay a few days longer after the wedding. "I know," said he, "that my father and mother now count the days; and their spirit is grievously afflicted within them."—*Tob.* 10: 9. And to Raphael he said: "Thou knowest that my father numbereth the days, and if I stay one day more, his soul will be afflicted."—*Tob.* 9: 4. Would to God I could say of all children that they love their parents with the same tenderness! Alas! Many keep up a show of love until their parents have bequeathed them their property, but afterwards their parents live too long. There are others who commence lawsuits against their own parents. Oh! that they would remember the fate of Absalom!

(*a.*) A sincere love demands that you should rejoice the heart of your parents *by leading a virtuous life, and by praying for them.* Nothing rejoices and consoles the heart of a good father and a pious mother more than the well-regulated, Christian life of their children. Parents value their children more than gold, silver, and precious stones; their eyes rest upon them with pleasure and satisfaction, and frequently in the joy of their heart they lift up their eyes to God, saying: Thanks be to God! we have good, well-behaved children, who never cause us any trouble. Even in the midst of temporal calamities, and when otherwise sorely tempted, they despond not, for the thought that their children are good and walk in the way of godliness is to them the greatest treasure and consolation. But *wayward* children are the heaviest cross laid upon the shoulders of parents. How great was the misery brought upon Jacob by his sons. When they showed him the bloodstained coat of his darling he was seized with such anguish that, tired of life, he wished for death. And how great was the misery brought upon David by Absalom, when in the perfidiousness of his heart, he marched with an army against his own father! David wept repeatedly in his grief. "My son, Absalom," said the king in his deep grief, "Absalom, my son; who would grant me that I might die for thee, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom!"—*II. Kings* 18; 33. And how bitterly in our own times do parents complain of the bad conduct of their children! How often do we hear them say: We are indeed obliged to bear many crosses, but would gladly bear and endure anything, if our son, our daughter, were not so wayward. They weep bitter tears and refuse to be consoled; grief consumes them, breaks their hearts and sends them to a premature grave.

(*b.*) Good children who sincerely love their parents never fail to remember them in their prayers. And if St. Paul desires first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men (*I. Tim.* 2: 1), how much more reason have our parents to expect our prayers! Is there any one in this world who is nearer and dearer to you, my dear children, than your parents? Are you not flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone; does not the same blood circulate in your veins? Has not God placed them in his stead? What then is more just and what can be more pleasing to God than that you should show your love for them by frequently praying for them and by recommending them to the grace and protection of God?

2. *Lastly, what does active love demand of you?* I answer *that you aid your parents in their corporal and spiritual wants.*

(*a.*) *In their corporal wants.* To be convinced of this duty, remember what your parents have done for you, especially in the

years of your childhood. If you be pious children, you will follow the example of Joseph of Egypt, who sent this message to his father: "Thus saith thy son Joseph: God hath made me lord of the whole land of Egypt; come down to me, linger not. * * * And thou shalt be near me * * *, and there I will feed thee."—*Gen.* 45:9, 10, 11. "If on the Day of Judgment God will be so severe on those who have shown no mercy, how much more severely will he act towards those who where uncharitable to their own parents."—*St. Bernard.*

(*b.*) Your fault will be the greater, if you neglect to aid your parents *in their spiritual wants.* If you love your parents sincerely, you will take care of their salvation, as far as it is in your power. Therefore, you will pray for them, and in time of dangerous illness will send for the priest. After their death, let it not be said of you: "Out of sight, out of mind." True charity extends beyond the grave. St. Louis, King of France, when in Palestine, received intelligence of his mother's death; whereupon he retired immediately to pray for the repose of her soul. Then he had many masses said for her, and sent many jewels to the various churches of his dominious, that prayers might be offered for the soul of his dearly-beloved mother.

PERORATION.

Such was the solicitude of this holy son for the peace and welfare of his holy mother even after death. And if you follow his example by loving your parents sincerely and actively it will be well with you here and hereafter. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

EPISTLE. *Rom.* 12: 15. Brethren: I beseech you, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God. For I say, by the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety, and according as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith. For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WHAT THE APOSTLE ADMONISHES US TO DO.

The lessons of this and the three following Sundays are taken from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, chapter 12, and comprise various precepts for the faithful in regard to pious conduct. Christians, remembering the inestimable grace which they received from Jesus Christ by their vocation from Judaism and Paganism to his Church, should strive to lead a holy life, in order to make themselves worthy of the grace of faith and thereby secure their salvation.

In the epistle for this day the Apostle exhorts us—

I. To the reasonable service of God;
II. To humility in the use of graces received.

PART I.

1. *Brethren, I beseech you, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy pleasing unto God, your reasonable service.*

The Apostle exhorts the Christians at Rome to remember that God called them out of pure love and mercy to the Christian Church, and that this grace should be to them a most powerful motive to serve him. He then tells them what their service of God should be in order to *be reasonable.* The Jews offered sacrifices of slaughtered and burnt animals. These were not *living,* but *dead* offerings. According to the Law, these animals were to be pure and faultless, for impure animals, such as swine, dogs, etc., were strictly forbidden. They were to be offered also with the intention of honoring and adoring God.

1. What shall Christians offer to the Lord as a worthy sacrifice? Not animals, for the sacrifice of animals ceased after the sacrifice of Christ, of which they were only the types. Christians should offer their bodies. What does this mean? It means that we should control the sinful desires and actions of the body, and employ its senses and members for the service of God. This sacrifice must have three qualities: it *must be living;* that is, we must not kill our body, as the Jews killed the animals which they offered to the Lord; we must stifle its sinful desires, but preserve the body as long as God wills; it must be *holy,* we must keep our body undefiled, chaste, in such a manner that it may always be a temple of God (*I. Cor.* 3: 16); it must be *pleasing to God,* that is whatever we do with the body must be done for God, for his greater honor and glory.

Now, if the body be offered to God in such a manner, it is a *divine service,* because to mortify the body, and to use it for that which is good, is according to the willof God, and is done out of veneration and obedience towards him; it is a *reasonable service,* because Christians who keep their bodies and their desires under control render themselves fit for and capable of walking in the way of virtue and of acquiring merits for heaven, which is certainly reasonable.

2. I shall now explain in what manner you are to present your bodies a *living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God,* so that your sacrifice may be a *reasonable service.*

(*a.*) Deny your body everything that is sinful. If you feel a carnal desire, stifle it at once. If your palate desire superfluous

meat and drink, or such an such dainties and delicacies, or things cooked in a particular manner, do not gratify it. Mortify your appetite and study moderation. If your eyes wish to see, your ears to hear, your tongue to speak, that which is sinful, control them and do not permit yourselves to be drawn into evil. How many opportunities for such mortifications have you not every day! Make use of them.

(*b.*) Deny your body occasionally something that is lawful, in order to subject it to the dominion of the spirit; for example, deprive yourselves of some meat, drink, or sleep, abstain from lawful enjoyments, mortify the senses in lawful things, keep silence for some time, when it can be done without ostentation. We frequently meet with such mortifications in the Lives of the Saints. They are very pleasing to God and acquire great graces for us. Therefore you should practice them. If in the evening, at your examination of conscience, you find that you have practiced no such mortification during the day, kneel down, kiss the floor, and say a "Hail Mary."

(*c.*) Employ your body in the conscientious performance of the duties of your religion and state of life. To this belong religious exercises, as prayer, going to church, hearing the Word of God, the reception of the sacraments. In fulfilling these duties, the body has no small part. Then there are the duties of your state of life, which require a large amount of bodily labor from all of us. In the performance of these duties, the body has often to endure much that is disagreeable: heat and cold, hunger and thirst, privation and weariness. Thus, in fulfilling our everyday duties we can at the same time, as St. Paul enjoins, *present our bodies a living sacrifice, pleasing unto God.* Lastly, I shall mention works of charity and other good works, in the performance of which the body must always be instrumental. In such a manner you should present your bodies to God a living, holy sacrifice, pleasing to him.

II. And be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God.

1. In these words the Apostle points out what more is required, that your service may please God and be reasonable service. Rome, at that time the capital of the world, was the seat of the most abominable debaucheries and vices; the newly-converted Christians were eye and ear witnesses to these abominations, which were in direct contradiction to Christian morals. For this reason the Apostle exhorts them not to be conformed to this

world, nor to live like vicious heathens. As Christians, crucified to God, they should have a different disposition of mind, should detest the debaucheries and vices of the heathens, love that which is modest, and follow the voice of their conscience, which would tell them what they were to do and what to avoid in order to please God, to edify their fellow-men, and to attain perfection.

2. What the Apostle writes to the Christians at Rome applies equally to us. "The whole world is seated in wickedness.—*I. John* 5: 19. "All that is in it is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (*I. John* 2: 16), vices diametrically opposed to Christianity, which enjoins us to be poor in spirit and meek of heart, and to mortify the sinful desires of the flesh. The world directs our desire only to earthly things: Christianity requires of us to seek the things that are above; the world knows no law but the gratification of the passions; Christianity commands us to subdue our passions and to sacrifice life itself rather than transgress the law of God; the world would have us live and work for time; Christianity cries out to us: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice."—*Matt.* 6: 33. If we wish to be Christians in truth, we must forsake the world and its maxims. Hence St. James says: "Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God."—*James* 4: 4. Examine and see whether the Spirit of God or that of the world governs you.

But, as we are all more or less influenced by the spirit of the world in our thoughts and actions, it is necessary to look closely into ourselves from time to time, and ascertain exactly where we are. Are we of the world, worldlings, or are we of Christ, Christians? Are we striving to act according to the precepts of the Church, striving to imitate Christ and the saints, or are we drifting towards the broad gate and easy way? To see the better into our spiritual condition, let us reflect on the following questions: Do I desire what Christ desires? Do I speak as Christ spoke? Do I act as Christ acted?

Since God reveals to us his will in a particular manner by our conscience, let us listen to its voice and do what it represents as good and pleasing to God, and what it commands; and let us avoid what it indicates as bad and displeasing to God, and what it forbids. He who obeys his conscience can not go astray; he is on the road to salvation; his life is a continual service of God.

PART II.

I. For I say, by the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than that it behoveth to be wise; but to be wise

unto sobriety, and according as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith.

1. Here the Apostle admonishes us to modesty and humility in the use of the gifts of God. To give more emphasis to his admonition, he appeals to "the grace that is given him," that is, to his apostolic mission, which justifies him in taking upon himself the office of teacher, and, in fact, obliges him to instruct the faithful, call their attention to their faults, and lay down rules for their conduct. We priests also, in virtue of our office, have the right, and it is our duty, "to preach the word of God, to be instant in season, out of season; to reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine" (*II. Tim.* 4: 2); but it is incumbent on you to listen to our instructions and exhortations. Do not forget the words of Christ: "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." Those are dubious Catholics who say: I do not care what priests say; they can say what they please; I shall do as I please.

2. The Apostle declares that his admonitions refer to all that are among them, not only to ordinary persons, but also to their superiors. No one, no matter how high his office, should think that he, an Apostle, must not command him. St. Paul has reason for this remark, because in the congregation of the faithful some superiors conducted themselves indiscreetly and haughtily, and caused disorder and disturbance among the faithful. From this you may learn that priests can not do as they please, for they are subordinate to the bishop and owe him strict obedience. Nor are the bishops perfectly independent; they are subordinate to the metropolitan, and he to the Pope, the head of the Church, appointed by Christ. A bishop who does not acknowledge the Pope as his spiritual head, and does not render him obedience, is not a Catholic bishop; a priest who does not submit to his bishop can not and must not be looked upon as a Catholic priest.

3. St. Paul exhorts all the faithful not to think themselves wiser than is behoves, but to think of themselves modestly; not to pride themselves upon their gifts, talents, or offices, nor to think themselves better than others who are destitute of those gifts, much less to despise others; but to be modest and humble, and use their authority for the glory of God and the welfare of their fellow-men. This is an important lesson for all of us. Let us never harbor pride in our heart. Whatever we possess, our faculties, worldly substance, etc., are all gifts from God; to him therefore honor and praise are due. If we have advantages over others, it should not be a cause for us to exalt ourselves above them, much less to look down upon them with contempt; on the

contrary, let us humble ourselves before God and praise him because out of pure mercy he has given us more than others, and let us not forget that much shall be required of him to whom much has been given. In order to keep ourselves in humility, let us reflect that pride changed Lucifer, one of the most beautiful of the angels, into a hideous devil.

Lastly, St. Paul says every one should think of himself modestly, *according as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith.* By the measure of faith the Apostle means the gifts of faith or spirit, such as the gifts of prophecy, tongues, miracles, which were frequently communicated to the faithful at their baptism and confirmation in the time of the Apostles. The Apostle wills that Christians should confine themselves modestly to the gifts that have been given them. Those who possess the gift of prophecy should only prophesy, and not assume any other office; those who have the gift of tongues should not think that on that account they are fit to teach others; every one should be content with the gift bestowed upon him by God, and not in his self-esteem infringe upon the office of others, to which he is not called. This admonition of the Apostle deserves our careful consideration. Every one should be content with the state in which God has placed him, and not wish for another or a better one; for such wishes are contrary to the will of God. Let every one confine himself to that which his state obliges him to do, and not meddle with affairs that do not concern him.

II. For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

The Apostle wishes to say by this simile: As we have a body consisting of many members which have various functions, so we all constitute one moral body, whose head is Christ. We form a society, and are related to one another like the members of a body, each of which has a peculiar function to perform for the good of the entire body. How senseless and pernicious it would be if the members of the human body were at variance and refused to serve one another, or if one member wished to be better and more important than the other! In like manner it would be most unreasonable and very injurious to a congregation should the members of the moral body of Jesus Christ, members of the Church, be at variance with one another and not serve one another, nor employ their powers and faculties for the common good.

PERORATION.

You should consider this, and study humility and modesty, for upon these virtues rests charity, which begets true peace and concord, and makes us true Christians. You are only members; Christ is the head; you are instruments, and it is your duty to labor for the welfare of the whole. None should think himself better or more useful than the other; every one is useful in his place and important, too, but none by himself alone. As the hand can not do without the foot nor the foot without the eye, so one member of the congregation can not do without the other; every one, if he do his duty well, is most useful for the individual members as well as for the whole congregation. Labor therefore humbly and modestly in your vocation, and show yourselves worthy members of the Church. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Luke* 2: 42-52. When Jesus was twelve years old they going up into Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not. And thinking that he was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers. And seeing him, they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? did ye not know that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH.

The Church every year presents to our view the life and actions of our Lord, from his Incarnation to his glorious Ascension into heaven, in order that we may consider from time to time what he has done for our salvation. Adhere to him in grateful love, and endeavor to participate in the fruits of Redemption. On Christmas Day we found a new-born Babe in the manger; on the Epiphany we saw the Magi before him, greeting him as the world's Redeemer, and worshiping him with the most profound humility. On the Sundays between Christmas and Epiphany his presentation in the temple, his flight into Egypt, and his return into the land of Israel, were brought prominently before us. This day we have Jesus before us a child of twelve years of age, and we see him appear, for the first time, self-reliant, manifesting unmistakably his Godhead and his dignity as the Messias. Let us meditate on what the gospel of this day relates—

I. Of Mary and Joseph;
II. Of the Child Jesus.

PART I.

1. The gospel relates of Mary and Joseph that, *when Jesus was twelve years old, they went up into Jersalem, according to the custom of the feast.* In accordance with the Mosaic Law (*Exodus* 23: 14-17), all male Jews were obliged to appear in the temple at Jerusalem, before the ark of the Lord, three times a year, viz., at Easter, Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles. Women were exempt from this ordinance, but it became binding upon boys as soon as they had attained their twelfth year; therefore from this age they were called "sons of the law."

(*a.*) Mary and Joseph made this long and fatiguing journey in order to assist at public worship. The distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem was about seventy-five miles. How much more easily you can comply with your religions duties! Your church is at no great distance from any of you; it takes only a few minutes for most of you to go to it, and yet there are Catholics who on Sundays and holidays neglect to hear mass, for which omission they are accountable before God.

(*b.*) Mary was not obliged to go to Jerusalem to solemnize the feast of Easter. There is no commandment to hear mass on

weekdays or to assist at devotions which are held at various times of the year. But those that are able ought to make use of such opportunities of honoring God, especially aged persons, who have leisure time. We ought to perform good works when and where we can, and not pause to inquire as to whether it is commanded or not. He who will not do a jot more than what is strictly commanded is lukewarm, and will sooner or later neglect what is commanded.

(*c.*) When Jesus had attained his twelfth year Mary and Joseph took him with them to Jerusalem. Parents, do you do this? Do you take your children to church on Sundays and holidays? Although not absolutely necessary, yet it would be advisable to take them with you; you might thus avoid their becoming guilty of so much levity and sin. Some parents do not send their children to church at all, but leave them at home. You must certainly know that children who have come to the use of reason are "children of the law." They are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to hear mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation. Sickness or bad weather alone exempts them from the obligation. Parents who do not insist on their going to church become guilty of a grievous sin. They should accustom their children to prayer and the usual religious exercises of devotion from early childhood, for "as the twig is bent, so the tree grows."

2. *When they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not. And thinking that he was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding him they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him.*

(*a.*) The Easter of the Jews lasted seven days, and consisted of sacrifices, instructions, the eating of the unleavened bread and of the paschal lamb. Mary and Joseph did not depart from Jerusalem until the seven days, and all the worship and exercises of devotion connected therewith had been concluded. A beautiful example for you to wait for the conclusion ofevery public service of the Church. Those to whom every service is too long and who can scarcely wait, or only wait impatiently, till the end comes, are surely not edifying or good Christians; whilst, on the other hand, if there is a question of amusements lasting many hours, day and night, they never find them too long. It would, perhaps, on account of the scandal they give, be better for them to remain away from church altogether.

(*b.*) Mary and Joseph, at their departure from Jerusalem did not know that Jesus had remained there. No blame, however, is

to be attached to them. The Jews who came to Jerusalem at Easter and returned home again did not travel all together, but formed themselves into little groups or companies, in which the men were separated from the women; they met only in the evening, at the stopping-place. This accounts for the possibility of the parents of Jesus making a day's journey from Jerusalem without missing the divine Child; for Mary would naturally expect that Jesus was with Joseph, and Joseph would think that the Child was with his blessed Mother, and both again, when they met, would think that he was certainly with their kinsfolk and acquaintance. It was only when they met at the stopping-place, and all their kinsfolk had arrived, that the error was discovered, and they accordingly returned to Jerusalem, seeking the divine Child. Mary and Joseph lost Jesus without any fault of theirs. But if we lose him, it is by our own fault, for he is lost only by mortal sin. As soon as a man commits a mortal sin Christ departs from him with his love and grace, and the unhappy sinner falls immediately into the power of Satan. Oh, who would not hate sin and flee from it as from an adder? Is not the loss of Christ a greater misfortune than the loss of all our property, nay, our very life? And yet there are many who are not in the least grieved at such a loss. They are merry and contented, when they should be shedding tears of blood. Ah! Christian friends, what will befall you after death if you live and die without Christ? There are also many parents who are quite indifferent when one of their children is lost by a mortal sin. The children live for years in debaucheries and vices, and their parents do not take it to heart, they do not take any pains to seek the lost child and to reclaim him. What an account will not such parents have to render before God for being so neglectful of their duties!

(*c.*) As soon as Mary and Joseph noticed the loss of Jesus they returned to Jerusalem and sought him. If you be so unfortunate as to fall into mortal sin and lose Jesus, do not remain in that unhappy state; seek him immediately by true repentance. Bridle your passions, give up your bad habits, renounce your sinful company, and make a good confession. Consider that your eternal welfare depends on your speedily seeking the divine child.

3. *And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting on the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions . . . And his mother said to to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.*

(*a.*) Mary and Joseph did not find Jesus among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, nor in the the streets and public places of

Jerusalem, but in the temple, in the midst of the teachers. Neither shall we find Jesus in frivolous society, and entertainments and amusements, nor in the tumult of the world; but in the church, in hearing the word of God, in the holy mysteries, and in the temple of our own heart. Without speaking figuratively, in communication with the world and in the enjoyment of its pleasures, man, instead of becoming better, frequently becomes worse, and defiles his conscience even with grievous sins, and, therefore, loses Jesus; but if, on the contrary, he visits the church diligently, prays devoutly, listens eagerly to the Word of God, receives the sacraments with due preparation, enters into himself, and reflects on the eternal truths, he is easily converted, becomes better, more virtuous, and finds Jesus.

(*b.*) Mary says: *Son, why hast thou done so to us?* This question is not a reproach, but rather a respectful complaint, proceeding from an affectionate mother's heart, whereby she indicates her sorrow at his loss. If we be visited by crosses and afflictions, it is not wrong to tell our sorrow to God, if, like the Virgin Mother of God, we remain patient and resigned to his will.

(*c.*) Mary calls Joseph the father of Jesus, because she would not and could not divulge the mystery of his wonderful Incarnation. Let us also keep those secrets which it would be neither necessary nor useful to reveal. Above all things, never reveal the faults of others without necessity. Mary mentions Joseph first and then herself; she does this through humility, concealing thedignity of her divine maternity, and not wishing to appear more than an ordinary married woman, who according to the will of God was under the dominion of her husband. Oh, that all married women would take this lesson to heart, and be subject to their husbands in all things that are right and just!

We have sought thee sorrowing. The sorrow of Mary at the loss of Jesus was, as spiritual writers say, the greatest that she endured during her life, greater than when she stood beneath the cross on Calvary; for there she could comfort herself with the thought: "My dear Son dies, but it is not my fault; it is the will of God;" but when she lost Jesus, she was in doubt as to whether she had not perhaps been guilty of some fault, on account of which Jesus may have withdrawn his presence from her; and it was this doubt that plunged her into an unfathomable sea of mental sufferings. Pious souls fear nothing so much as to displease God; the smallest fault is the greatest misfortune in their eyes. He therefore who carelessly commits lesser faults and feels no disquietude shows that his love of God is weak and imperfect.

PART II.

1. The gospel relates that Jesus in his twelfth year went to Jerusalem for the feast of the Pasch. He would show, thus early in his youth, that all his thoughts and desires were directed to the service of God. Oh, that we had followed this example from our youth! How happy would be our lot! how peacefully and confidently might we think on our soul's salvation! But alas! how many there are among us who have passed the years of their youth in levity and sin! how many who must sigh with David: "O Lord, remember not the sins of my youth and ignorances." —*Ps.* 24: 7. Let us now at least labor zealously for our salvation, in order to make up for what was neglected in the years of our childhood and youth. The thought that those who entered the vineyard at the sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours, received, like the rest, every man a penny, should animate our confidence and encourage us to devote the rest of our life with all zeal to the service of God.

2. *Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and spent three days in the temple.* By this he gives us to understand how gladly, if it could have been done, he would have remained in the house of his heavenly Father, in order to devote himself, with incomparably greater fervor than did the youthful Samuel before him, to the divine service. Do you love to pray in the house of God? Does it give you pleasure to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to devote yourselves to exercises of piety, to read religious books? It would not, indeed, be a good sign if a visit to the church, prayer, and exercises of devotion are distasteful to you; this would betray worldly-mindedness, little love for God, lukewarmness. Rekindle your love for prayer, and resolve rather to prolong the exercises of devotion than to shorten them, if it can be done without detriment to your other duties. Consider that you need nourishment, not only for your body, but also for your soul; and the nutriment of the soul consists in exercises of devotion.

3. *Jesus said to them: How is it that you sought me? Did ye not know that I must be about my Father's business?* These are the first words that the gospel records of our divine Saviour, and they deserve our serious attention. "How is it that you sought me?" At first sight, this answer of Jesus seems rather harsh and stern, but in reality it contains only a lesson; Jesus meant to say; "You know well who I am and that without my willing it no harm can befall me; it was not therefore necessary for you to be concerned on account of my absence." Jesus referred to his

divine person, and at the same time gave his mother an opportunity to exercise, by a respectful and silent acceptance of his instructive words, the virtues of humility and meekness, which she did in the most perfect manner.

According to this example of the blessed Mother of God, you should accept reproaches meekly and humbly, even if they be bitter and undeserved. To keep silence when we are reprimanded for a fault of which we are guilty is a great virtue; but to be reproved when our conscience declares us innocent, and then to remain calm and quiet, this is genuine virtue and the best proof of humility. Reflect how you have behaved when you were reproached. Did you become angry? Did not self-love often blind you, so that even when you were guilty you endeavored to appear innocent? Oh, combat your self-love, and become meek and humble of heart, that you may accept every reproach, even when undeserved, as a spiritual alms.

4. *And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them.* Let us reflect on these words of the text and ask ourselves, who was subject? The Creator, to creatures; the Master, to servants; God, to man. In truth, an admirable obedience. Wherein was Jesus obedient? In the least and meanest things, obedient to his foster-father in the shop, to his mother in domestic affairs. He obeyed cheerfully, humbly, and promptly, and not for a few-weeks and months only, but up to his thirtieth year. What an excellent example of humility! Children, both little and grown-up children, think of this obedience, and be abashed in your inmost heart, that you are so disobedient to your parents! With what eyes will Jesus look upon you, when he hears your parents complain, saying: "Ah! our children are so self-willed, so stubborn, they embitter our life by their disobedience." Amend your lives, or your declining years will also be without comfort or hope. Practice humility according to the example of Jesus, and consider that it is more meritorious to pick up a pin in obedience, than to pray for hours, or fast on bread and water, at your own will and caprice.

5. *And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men.* The wisdom, grace and sanctity of Jesus were infinite from the first moment of his incarnation; he could not actually receive an increase of them; he increased in them only in the sense that he daily gave clearer proofs and manifestations of the infinite fulness of his divine wisdom, grace, and sanctity, and revealed them to the outside world. He thus resembled the sun, which, although it never changes, yet the higher is ascends in the heavens, and the nearer it approaches the zenith, the stronger and brighter does its light seem to the inhabitants of the earth

How is it with us? Can it be said of us in truth, that as we have advanced in years we also have increased in wisdom and grace, in virtue and holiness? We may have increased in knowledge, we may have bettered our circumstances, but we have not, perhaps, as yet acquired the first rudiments of wisdom and virtue. How many of us for a number of years have not advanced a step in virtue, but are still infected with the same faults and bad habits? How many of us must say: "I lived a better life five or ten years ago than I do now, and I scarcely knew then by name the sins which I now commit." Oh, let us humble ourselves before God, and repent of our lukewarmness and forgetfulness of God and of our salvation.

PERORATION.

Let us resolve to strive earnestly from this day forward to amend our lives. To this end, let us not disguise from ourselves, or try to palliate, our faults and failings. Let us rather acknowledge them, humble ourselves for the past, and resolve with the grace of God to fight against them. To succeed, we must begin at once to practice the opposite virtues. Let us look upon every day that we do not employ for our eternal salvation as spent in vain. And, indeed, so it is. Only one thing is necessary. To spend our days profitably we have but to be mindful of the presence of God, reflecting seriously and frequently on the eternal truths; we must have recourse to prayer and receive the sacraments as often as possible. By the frequent use of these means we shall advance in virtue and obtain that degree of perfection which is necessary for the attainment of life everlasting. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE LEGISLATIVE POWER OF THE CHURCH.

And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the Pasch.—Luke 2: 41.

The Jews were obliged by the Mosaic Law to appear at Jerusalem three times a year; namely, at the solemnities of the *Pasch*,

of Pentecost, and of the Feast of Tabernacles. "Three times in a year shall thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose: in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles."—Deut. xvi. 16. How scrupulously the Holy Family observed this ordinance of their Church we learn from the gospel of this day, which says that the parents of Jesus went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch. Even Mary, who was exempt from this law, every year made the long and fatiguing journey to Jerusalem in company with Joseph, in order to celebrate there the solemn day of the Pasch. The gospel also tells us that Mary and Joseph took the divine Child to Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. They did this in obedience to the law, for as soon as boys had attained their twelfth year, they were obliged to observe the ordinances of the law, and were therefore at that age called "children of the law."

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph give us a beautiful example of how we ought to observe the ordinances of Holy Church. In order to encourage you to comply with this duty, I shall speak to-day about the legislative power of the Church and explain to you that the Church has the power—

I. To make laws, and
II. To punish the violation of these laws.

Part I.

By the Church we here understand its presiding officers, the pastors of the Church, that is, the Pope and the bishops. The Pope, as head of the Church, can make laws for the entire Catholic world. Ecumenical councils can do the same, and their laws have binding force, provided always that the Pope confirms their decrees. Individual bishops can make ordinances and rules for their respective dioceses, because these only are subject to their jurisdiction. That the Church has the power to make laws is evident—

1. *From reason.* In every society, large or small, there must be some one who has the right to command and to make the necessary rules for its government; otherwise a society could not exist at all. Imagine a family of about ten members, in which there is no one to command, and no one who obeys, but every one does as he pleases: could there be peace and concord in such a family? On the contrary, there could be nothing but disorder and confusion, and it could not subsist for any length of time. This, as is self-evident, would be much more the case in a country if there were no authority and no legislative power

Therefore in every family, community, kingdom, or republic, there must be a head, and laws which must be observed by all, and a legislative power to ordain all things necessary for the common good. The Church is also a society, and, indeed, the greatest in the world, for she numbers two hundred and fifty million members; she is an empire that extends over the whole earth, and is to receive all men into her bosom, and to exist to the end of time. How could the Church exist at all and attain this end, if she had no legislative power, if no one within her pale had the power to make laws, and if no one would be restrained by law? Union would cease; "in union there is strength;" order would be dissolved, and "order is heaven's first law;" and the ruin of the Church would be inevitable. Thus reason convinces us that the Church must have power to make laws. This is also evident—

2. *From the ordinance of Christ, who commissioned the Church to rule and govern the faithful.* He said to his Apostles: "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 18. In these words, Christ evidently constituted his Apostles pastors and governors of his Church, and gave them the power to make laws. Again he says to his Apostles: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—*Matt.* 28: 19, 20. Accordingly, the Apostles were not only to teach all nations, but they were also to insist upon the Christian doctrine being observed by all. The Apostles were therefore constituted rulers in the Church, and as such have power to make all ordinances which are necessary for the observance of the divine law. Lastly, Christ said to Peter in particular: "Feed my sheep."—*John* 21: 16, 17. Peter is hereby raised above the other Apostles and made chief pastor; he receives from Christ the same rights that a shepherd has over his flock. The shepherd is the leader of the flock; the sheep must follow him, for they are given into his charge. Peter, in consequence of this supreme pastorship given to him alone, has power over the universal Church; he is her commander-in-chief; what he ordains must be done; every individual Catholic owes him spiritual allegiance. Christ therefore has given to his Church the power to make laws for her government.

3. It is manifest, moreover, from the fact that *the Apostles and their lawful successors in the ministry always claimed this legislative power for themselves, and made ordinances as circumstances required.* The Apostles did this even at the Council of Jerusalem, when they said: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us,

to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things; that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication."—*Acts* 15: 28, 29. To abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from impurity was a divine law, which the Apostles inculcated anew; but the abstinence from blood and strangled things was something which previously was neither commanded nor forbidden as regards Christians. Now, if the Apostles also include these among the necessary things, and in doing so appeal to the Holy Ghost, it follows that they considered themselves vested with legislative power and therefore in a position to exact the obedience of the faithful. For this reason St. Paul, on his journey through Syria and Cilicia, commanded the Christian congregations in those places to observe the ordinance of the Apostles and of their own elders, that is, bishops; and himself made several rules which he considered expedient for the good of those flourishing Churches. —*Acts* 15: 41.

Church history relates the same of the successors of the Apostles. Among all the Popes who, from Peter down to Leo XIII., have ruled the Church, there is scarcely one who has not made various ordinances for the faithful. They also required that these ordinances should be observed. Pope Hilarius says: "It shall not be permissible for any one, without peril to his state, to violate either the divine ordinances or the decisions of the Apostolic See." The councils, too, were occupied, not only with defining what is to be believed, but they also made regulations with regard to divine worship and everything pertaining to ecclesiastical life. This may be said particularly of the Council of Trent, in which the assembled fathers enacted in every session most wholesome laws for the amelioration of morals and the renovation of Church discipline. It is therefore an incontrovertible truth that the Church has the power to make laws.

PART II.

The Church possesses also the power to punish those who violate her laws.

1. This power is essentially necessary to the Church for the performance of her task, which consists in the purification and sanctification of her children. Imagine a teacher who is allowed to instruct children and to give them lessons in morality, but not to correct or punish them. How would their education progress? Certainly not very well. Many, if not all the children, would care little about the good lessons, and would disregard them, having no punishment to fear. Or imagine a state which has the right to make laws, but not the power to enforce them and bring those

who violate them to condign punishment. Could such a state subsist? No. The laws would be violated without scruple, because no punishment is to be feared, and in a short time such a state of things would prevail that there would be no security for life or property. All the bounds of order would be severed and the social edifice would finally tumble. A similar fate might have befallen the Church, if God in his infinite wisdom had not vested her with this chastening power. She could not maintain her authority nor keep her members in order; her laws would lose their force and be violated by the majority of her children. It is evident, then, that the Church could not attain the end for which she was established, which is the purification, sanctification, and salvation of her children for all time to come, unless she had the power in some way to punish those who violate her laws.

That the Church has the power to punish is evident from the words of Christ: "If thy brother shall offend thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the Church. And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 15-17. Therefore, if a Christian who is guilty of a crime will listen neither to the admonition of his fellow-Christians nor to those of his spiritual superiors, he is to be looked upon as a man who by his contumacy has separated himself from the communion of the faithful, and the spiritual superior is to declare this and eject him, that he may amend his life, or at least not infect others by communication with them. Here Christ pronounces the greatest of all punishments, namely, excommunication from the communion of the Church.

The Apostles and their successors, as often as it was necessary, made use of this authority to punish, received from Christ. Thus St. Paul declares that he is ready to punish all disobedience, in virtue of the power given to him by the Lord, not for destruction, but for edification.—*II. Cor.* 10: 8. The same Apostle excommunicated the incestuous Corinthian until he atoned for his crime by suitable repentance.

In Church history we find many examples of Popes and bishops using the same power; and the earliest councils contain not only laws and ordinances, but also punishments for the violators of them. Hence Pope Pius VI. declared the proposition heretical, that the Church did not possess the power to inflict punishment. The Church, however, does not punish, like the temporal powers, with fines, imprisonment, or death, because she is a spiritual power and deals with the soul of man; therefore her punishments are spiritual, that is, such as affect the soul. Her

punishments never refer to those that do not belong to her communion, but only to her members; and in punishing them she has in view not so much their punishment as their amendment. Her conduct is that of an affectionate mother. She acts in this regard like St. Paul, who excommunicated the incestuous Corinthian, that "his spirit might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."—*I. Cor.* 5: 5.

Ecclesiastical punishments are inflicted on sinful Christians who persevere pertinaciously in sin, and on the contumacious, with the object of inducing them to consider their dangerous condition, by which their salvation is imperilled, and to amend their lives. As soon as this object is attained the punishment ceases.

These punishments consist in the deprivation of spiritual benefits, such as the holy sacraments, indulgences, participation in public worship by hearing mass, participation in the merits and intercession of the faithful on earth and of the saints in heaven, and lastly, Christian burial.

2. There are three ecclesiastical punishments: *Excommunication*, *suspension*, and *interdict*.

A person placed under the ban of *excommunication* is entirely excluded from the communion of the Church and deprived of all participation in the graces which she possesses, especially the sacraments. The grace of prayer alone is left him. He is allowed to assist only at the sermon and catechetical instruction, that, by hearing the word of God, he may be reclaimed from his evil ways. If he does not amend his life, but dies under the ban, he is deprived of Christian burial, that is, his body will not be received into the church nor be permitted to be placed in consecrated ground. No priest will bless it or accompany it to the grave. No prayers will be said over it; nor will the holy sacrifice of the mass be offered up for the repose of his soul.

Suspension is a punishment which can affect priests only who are guilty of certain crimes; it consists in deprivation, either entire or in part, of the powers which they possess by virtue of their ordination, or of their office and their emoluments.

By *interdict* the bond of ecclesiastical communion is not entirely severed but the solemn performance of divine worship, the public reception and administration of certain sacraments, and funeral processions are prohibited. This punishment may, on account of some great outrage, be inflicted on an entire country, city, or community, as also upon individual persons, and will continue in force until the guilty parties make proper amends.

Ecclesiastical punishments are more severe than those inflicted by temporal authorities, for the latter affect only temporal goods and the life of the body, whereas the former affect spiritual goods and the life of the soul. He who is not corrected by the

punishments of the Church is delivered to perdition. Church history furnishes us with many striking instances in which God, even in this world, visited with severe chastisements those men who had scoffed at or disregarded the ecclesiastical censures inflicted upon them; for instance, they lost their possessions, their position, or met with a sudden death. Examples: Napoleon I. and III.

PERORATION.

The Church possesses the power to make laws and to punish the violation of them. From this it follows that it is your duty scrupulously to obey the Church. Do not imitate the example of nominal Catholics, who, imagining that the Church has no right to their obedience, slight her precepts and ordinances, and ridicule those who obey her. You owe it to *God* to obey the Church; she holds the place of God upon earth; disobedience to her is disobedience to her Founder, Christ himself, and would be a sin meriting the indignation of God and eternal damnation. You owe it to *yourselves* to render obedience to the Church and to follow her guidance. It is your duty, as long as you live, to labor to become holy. But could you attain that end if you do not obey the Church who has been given to you by God to be your mother, teacher, and guide? Would you wish to share the lot of heathens and publicans, whose end is destruction? Obey, then, the Church; keep her precepts as strictly and conscientiously as the commandments of God, so that Christ, the Founder and Head of the Church, may one day acknowledge you as good and faithful servants, and admit you to the joys of eternal life. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

ON PILGRIMAGES.

When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast.—Luke 2: 42.

We see to-day Jesus, Mary, and Joseph on a pilgrimage; they travel from Nazareth to Jerusalem, to celebrate in the temple the feast of the Pasch. The way from Nazareth to Jerusalem was

long and fatiguing, being about seventy-five miles, and led over mountains. Mary and Joseph were poor and possessed but small means for defraying traveling expenses; Jesus was only twelve years old, and hardly strong enough for so long a journey, which must have taken five or six days at least. And yet the Holy Family made that pilgrimage, and not once only in their life, but every year, as long as they lived in Nazareth. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph teach us that to make a pilgrimage is a laudable exercise in itself, and that no one who performs it in the proper spirit should be denounced for so doing. I shall speak to you to-day of several things in regard to pilgrimages, and explain—

I. That pilgrimages are good, if
II. The right use be made of them.

Part I.

The Church does not command pilgrimages, but declares them good and salutary.

1. The desire to make pilgrimages is deeply rooted in the heart of man; therefore everywhere and at all times they have taken place.

(*a.*) Every one feels within himself a desire to visit those places where a renowned person has lived, or where remarkable and important events have taken place. Many travel hundreds of miles merely to see those distant places where a famous general, a distinguished poet, or a celebrated scientist has lived, or where a great battle was fought. They say: That is a renowned place. I must see it. With nobler and greater sentiments of attraction does the enlightened Catholic sigh and long to visit those places which are sanctified by religion and contain venerable monuments of his faith. Where is the Christian who does not feel a longing desire to visit that land which was the scene of the most remarkable events recorded in the Sacred Scripture, where our blessed Redeemer's sacred feet once trod, where he died for our redemption, and which has been very appropriately called, and pre-eminently is, the Holy Land?

(*b.*) Pilgrimages are, as it were, the outpourings of this religious feeling, therefore we find them customary among all peoples and at all times. The ancient pagans even had, so to speak, their holy places which they would frequent in pilgrim bands from far distant countries. The Jews frequently went thus to Mount Moria, and especially to the temple at Jerusalem. The Mohammedans, as is well known, make a pilgrimage every year, either individually or in great multitudes, to Mecca. Since Christianity

does not destroy the natural feelings inherent in man, but ennobles them, we may also expect to find pilgrimages customary among Christians.

Palestine, from the first ages of Christianity, was the land to which Christians ever turned their longing eyes. St. Jerome says it would be impossible to number the bishops and martyrs and men versed in science who as humble pilgrims visited Jerusalem. These pilgrimages to the Holy Land became more numerous in the course of time.

From the remarks just made, it can be easily understood that the eyes of Western Europe were soon turned towards Rome. There is the city and See of Peter. There, too, he was martyred; there his remains, with those of his fellow laborer, St. Paul, are preserved. And so it came to pass that pilgrimages to Rome, to the Tomb of the Apostles, were made from the earliest times. Pope Nicholas, in the ninth century, writes: "Many thousands of people come daily to Rome, from all parts of the world, and recommend themselves to the intercession of the Princes of the Apostles." Besides Rome and Jerusalem, Compostella in Spain, where the Apostle St. James is venerated, was one of the principal resorts of pilgrims. In like manner, the Christians visited the graves of the martyrs and other saints, and especially those places which God glorified by miracles, such as wonderful cures, etc. To this class also belong those places where miraculous apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary have occurred, as Loretto, in Italy; Lourdes, in France.

2. *Pilgrimages are not only good and commendable, but also salutary.*

(*a.*) It is good aud salutary for man occasionally to withdraw himself for a time from his worldly business and cares and occupy himself entirely with God and his salvation. Pilgrimages afford an easy opportunity for doing this. The pilgrim withdraws himself for a time from the turmoil of the world and turns his thoughts to eternal things. In quiet reflection upon his destiny he feels himself elevated, makes good resolutions, and dedicates himself with greater fervor to the service of God. In this respect pilgrimages are to the soul what pleasure tours are to the body.

(*b.*) Pilgrimages have many disagreeable features connected with them; he who takes upon himself these disagreeable things, and bears them patiently in the spirit of penance, has in them an effectual means of repentance. This is the view of the Church.

(*c.*) Pilgrimages tend to arouse or renew in us the spirit of prayer and devotion; for the pilgrims pray well nigh continuously,

going and coming, and at the place of pilgrimage. These prayers would not be said if the pilgrimage were not made. People generally pray more devoutly at the place of pilgrimage than at home. The example of so many other devout persons on the same errand, and the sacred recollections which are associated with the holy place, animate them to pray with more devotion, intensity, and emotion than they are accustomed to do otherwise.

(*d.*) Lastly, the pilgrims ordinarily receive at the place of pilgrimage the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and with greater advantage to their souls and elsewhere, being better disposed. Many out of fear and shame have concealed sins for years from their ordinary confessor. There, at the place of pilgrimage, they meet one to whom they find it easy to reveal the secret wounds of their soul, because he is unknown to them and they to him, and after leaving the confessional they will never meet him on earth again. Thus sacrilegious confessions of many years' standing are often remedied.

3. *Pilgrimages frequently procure for us wonderful aid in the necessities of this life.* It is an incontestable fact that wonders have been performed in places of pilgrimage. People variously afflicted have there found relief. St. Augustine, the great Bishop of Hippo, mentions several miracles which happened during his own time and in his own episcopal city and vicinity, through the invocation of St. Stephen, and he adds that if he were obliged to describe them in detail it would require many volumes. Every place of pilgrimage has a record of such miracles, not a few of which have been investigated by the Church and confirmed as authentic. Therefore we find in such places a multitude of votive tablets by which Christians from all countries and in all stations in life testify to the wonderful relief which they have received in their sufferings or necessities. Such places, images, pictures, etc., as God glorifies by miracles, are called miraculous places, etc. It would be superstition to expect help from such places or images of themselves, for God alone can aid us. All the miracles that occur proceed from God alone through the intercession of the B. Virgin or some saint. It is certain that God frequently attaches his gracious assistance to particular places and images, etc. Recall to your minds the brazen serpent set up for a sign in the desert, and the pool of Bethsaida near Jerusalem.—*John* 5: 2. Think of the particular virtues which God has attached to certain plants and minerals. As all physicians know, some have the virtue to cure this, others that malady. If God has caused various natural and supernatural effects to be produced by certain things, who could he astonished that be does the same with regard to certain places and images? We do not know the reason, it is true;

but hystory proves the fact incontrovertibly. In places of pilgrimage a really living faith and a firm confidence are exhibited among the faithful, and it is doubtless owing to this faith and confidence that God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, answers the prayers of those who there seek help.

PART II.

That a pilgrimage may be edifying and salutary it is necessary that a good use be made of it. It must be made—

1. *With a good intention.* A pilgrimage must be made for the honor of God. Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all things for the glory of God." God is honored if we praise and glorify him, thank him for his gifts and graces, and ask with confidence for temporal and spiritual benefits. If, therefore, you make a pilgrimage with the intention of praising and adoring God, of thanking him, or of imploring a grace of him, it is right and good. The same is the case when you visit a place, in order to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary or the saints, and to ask their intercession, because the honor which we give to the B. Virgin and the saints redounds to the honor of God. It would not be wrong or unadvisable to make a pilgrimage with the view of recreating ourselves, or of recuperating our physical powers in order to acquire new strength for the duties of our state of life, provided that we unite with it the desire of promoting the greater honor and glory of God; for to strive by the use of all lawful means to fit ourselves for the faithful performance of the duties of our particular vocation in life is according to the will of God. It is, however, wrong to undertake a pilgrimage out of mere curiosity, to see and hear marvels; a pilgrimage is something holy and must not be abused for the gratification of idle curiosity; such curiosity would be an impediment to recollection and devotion. Some join the pilgrims to avoid work, for work does not attract them. This is wrong; work is a duty imposed upon every one who is able to labor. It is still more objectionable to go on a pilgrimage with the intention of withdrawing one's self from the control of one's superior, or to have a chance of gratifying one's sinful desires more freely. This would manifestly be to abuse a holy thing, and would be culpable before God.

2. *At the proper time.* We are not commanded to make pilgrimages, therefore they must be made at proper times; that is, at times when no duty stands in the way. Things that are commanded have the preference before those that are only recommended, and the latter must be omitted when they cannot be done without

the omission of the former. Fathers and mothers must not go if there be reason to fear that the children and servants would abuse their absence and do wrong. The same is to be said of mothers with young children that need a mother's care. When you intend to make a pilgrimage, you must ask yourselves the question: Do I, by doing so, neglect any duty? If one has bound one's self by a vow to make a pilgrimage, but can not do it without the violation of certain grave duties, one must postpone the pilgrimage till it can be done without violating those duties, or one must get a dispensation from the vow, if the duties still remain. In making a vow you must be prudent and not precipitate, for circumstances may take place which would render a pilgrimage to distant places very inconvenient and difficult, if not impossible.

PERORATION.

When you make a pilgrimage have the honor of God in view; namely, to adore God, to thank him for graces received, to ask further graces from him, and to obtain of him help in your necessities through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. Take care that you do not neglect any of your duties; do first what you are obliged to do, and then what is left to choice. Make the pilgrimage in the spirit of penance, for the amendment of your life, and for the attainment of the graces and benefits which you ask of God. Look upon your whole life as a pilgrimage, and endeavor so to go through the world that you may not lose that which is eternal. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

WHAT WE NEED ON OUR JOURNEY TO THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast.—Luke 2: 42.

The gospel of this day mentions the journey which the Holy Family made to Jerusalem, in order to celebrate there the feast of the Pasch. Neither Jesus, Mary, his holy Mother, nor Joseph, his foster-father, was obliged to undertake this long and laborious

journey. Jesus was not obliged, for as God-Man he was not subject to the ceremonial law of Moses; Mary was not obliged, for this law was only for males; nor was Joseph compelled, because he was poor and was obliged to provide for his family by hard labor; he therefore had good and sufficient reason to be exempt from the law. The Holy Family, however, full of zeal for the service of God, did not content themselves with complying only with the strict requirements of the Law, but they joyfully embraced every opportunity that offered itself for pious exercises and works pleasing to God. Our journey is not to the ancient temple, but to the new, heavenly Jerusalem, that Jerusalem where we shall dwell with God and be his people, where "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow."—*Apoc.* 21: 3, 4. But what do we need on our journey, in order to arrive safely at the heavenly Jerusalem? We need three things:

I. Good clothes;
II. Sufficient money, and
III. Good stopping-places.

PART I.

Good clothes.

1. He that is about to make a journey of several weeks' or months' duration, provides himself with good clothing. Why? In order to protect himself from the inclemency of the weather, and that he may make a respectable appearance and a favorable impression among strangers.

2. We also need good garments on our journey to the heavenly Jerusalem, for this journey is of long duration and full of difficulties and dangers. In what does this clothing consist? Perhaps in raiments according to the latest fashions, in which ladies of the present day love to deck themselves? No; such clothing is not suitable for a long journey, and least of all for the journey to the heavenly Jerusalem. It is not lasting enough. We should certainly not be far astray in suspecting those of pride and coquetry who are always the first to introduce the new fashions, and who make it their study to live up to the latest approved cuts and styles. But pride and coquetry do not lead to heaven. The rich man who was clothed in fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day, was buried in hell.—*Luke* 16: 19, 20. The clothing which I mean is that garment of innocence and grace which the priest gave us at our baptism, saying: "Receive this white garment, and see that thou carry it without stain before the judg-

ment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life." This is the garment we must have, otherwise we can not make a step on our journey to the heavenly Jerusalem; and if we appear without it before Christ, our Judge, we shall fare no better than the guest mentioned in the gospel who went to the marriage feast without having on a wedding garment.—*Matt.* 22.

How is with you? Have you the garment of sanctifying grace? Does your conscience accuse you of no mortal sin? Happy you, if this be the case! If so, God looks down upon you with pleasure, he loves you as his children, and you may hope that you will one day be heirs of his kingdom. But how ill it would be with you, if you were obliged to say: I have put off the garment of innocence long ago and walk in the habiliments of sin; I live as the generality of men, indulge my passions and evil inclinations, and in many things transgress God's holy commandments. If such were the case, your way would not lead to the heavenly Jerusalem, but to the fire of hell. Only one thing could save you: the recovery of the garment of sanctifying grace by radical and constant penance. Oh, that all at the beginning of this new year, which for many may be the last of their earthly pilgrimage, would recover this most necessary traveling dress!

Part II.

Sufficient money.

1. You may travel by water or by land, walk or ride; in any case you will need money, for without money you can get nothing to eat or drink, you can not stop at an hotel over night, you can not travel on the cars without a ticket, and this costs money. Every one, therefore, who intends to make a journey, provides himself with money. We also need money on our journey to the heavenly Jerusalem, for without it we cannot arrive at our journey's end. What kind of money? Neither gold, nor silver, nor nickel, nor "greenbacks," nor "government bonds," but *good works;* without this kind of money we can make no progress on our journey, nor shall we be admitted into the heavenly Jerusalem without the ticket of good works. There was a law in ancient Rome according to which every one who wished to become a citizen was to show his hands to the mayor of the city. If the skin of his hands were thick and hard, he was admitted to citizenship, but if they were fine, soft, tender or delicate, like ladies' hands, he was rejected as a lazy, good-for-nothing fellow, since they wanted no lazy drones for citizens, but hard-working, industrious men. So our divine Judge will act, if you wish one day to become citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. He will say: Show me your hands. If then you have not the hands of a hard-

working laborer, but those of an idler, believe me, you will share the lot of the lazy unprofitable servant in the gospel.—*Matt.* 25. Heaven is a reward, a payment, for something done, and payment is made only to laborers, not to idlers. See the parable of the vineyard.—*Matt.* 20.

2. We must provide ourselves, then, with good works. But, you will say, how can I provide myself with good works? I have no opportunity of performing them. Listen, and I will tell you how in your state of life you can perform good works in sufficient number. Rise in the morning with pious thoughts, make the sign of the cross, and say your morning prayers devoutly; behold, here you have already three good works. Go to your daily avocations in the name of God; this is another good work. Labor diligently in your shop, in your field, in your office, your store, or wherever it may be; these again are good works. Say your grace before meals, and eat with decorum and moderation; these again are good works. Finish the day with an examination of your conscience and devout night prayers, which are both good works. You are annoyed with bad thoughts by day or night; the devil seeks an entrance into your heart, he entices you to pride, impurity, anger; say at once, these are sinful thoughts, I must banish them; if you do so, you again perform good works. The labor is hard, you are going to lose your patience; call to mind that Christ also suffered a great deal when he was in the world, and you will preserve your patience. This is another good work. Your eyes would look here and there at impure objects and see things which inflame evil desires in your heart; your ears would hear, your tongue speak, things which are wrong; mortify them and these again are good works. Thus, you have every day many opportunities of performing good works. If on Sundays and holidays you visit the church diligently, read a spiritual book and pray at home, or visit a sick person, you perform good works. You see, you have ways and means enough for the practice of good works. And if, during your whole life, you make use of all the working-days and feast-days for good works, their number will be very great, and when you have finished your earthly career, after fifty, sixty, or seventy years thus spent, your heavenly Father will receive you with all kindness and in exchange for the good coin of your meritorious works will give you heaven as a reward.

PART III.

Good stopping-places.

1. Without good stopping-places, where one can find wholesome food and rest, traveling would be impossible; for the traveler

must sometimes eat and drink, in order to be able to continue his journey; he also needs a room at night in which he can sleep. Such stopping-places we need on our journey to the heavenly Jerusalem. Glory be to God, there is no scarcity of such stopping-places. I shall mention only three:

(*a.*) *Prayer.* If a traveler is overtaken by a storm, and the thunder and lightning begin, he is glad to find shelter in a house. In the storms which we encounter on the journey of life, such an inn or stopping-place is prayer. In all these storms, that is, in all the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, we must always seek refuge in the hospice of prayer. If we pray devoutly, fervently, and with confidence, we can brave all storms. By prayer we become invincible, because God Almighty is with us. "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—*Matt.* 26: 41. If in every temptation you pray to God devoutly for help, I assure you that you will never sin.

(*b.*) *The word of God.* The wayfarer frequently does not know the road; it is, therefore, desirable to find an inn where he can receive the desired information. This information for our journey we receive in the word of God, which the priest announces to us, or which a religious book contains. We there hear which road we must take to attain our eternal end, we are cautioned against the paths which lead to perdition, we hear what we must do or avoid in order to lead a good life and save our soul. Esteem yourselves happy that you have frequent opportunities of hearing the word of God, and never neglect it through your own fault. Love to hear sermons and to read spiritual books.

(*c.*) *The holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.* It frequently happens that travelers fall sick on the way, become fatigued and worn out, and can scarcely continue their journey. How welcome to the poor traveler in this vale of tears must not a place be in which he can find shelter, recuperate his health, and gather the necessary strength for the prosecution of his journey. Such a place we have in the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. If our soul, in consequence of the sins we commit, become sick, sick unto death, have we not confession, in which we are healed from all spiritual maladies? And is not holy communion the bread of the strong, which gives power to walk perseveringly in the way of virtue? Elias is strengthened by the bread and water which an angel gives him.—*III. Kings* 19: 1-14. Do not become careless in the reception of the sacraments. Confess and communicate frequently during the year, that in your sickness you may receive health, and in your weakness, strength.

PERORATION.

You know now what your requirements are on life's journey in order to arrive safely at the heavenly Jerusalem; you need good clothing, sufficient money, and good hospices. Be solicitous for these necessary things. Preserve unsullied the garment of innocence, of sanctifying grace, as your most precious jewel. Consider that Jesus has purchased that garment for you, not with gold and silver, but at the price of his precious blood, and barter it not away, even if it cost you your life to preserve it. Procure the necessary money, "labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election."—*II. Peter* 1: 10. Turn frequently into the hospices which you find on our journey; watch and pray; pray fervently, especially in the time of temptation; listen to the word of God, and receive, as often as possible, the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. If you do this, I promise you good fortune on your journey. You will arrive safely at your journey's end, and be admitted into the heavenly Jerusalem, there to dwell with God and his elect in everlasting joy and happiness. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

PARENTS MUST NOT ALLOW THEIR CHILDREN TO KEEP BAD COMPANY.

They returned into Jerusalem, seeking him.—Luke 2: 45.

Mary and Joseph lost the divine Child, not by any fault of theirs but by an ordinance of God, who wished to try them, as he visits the holiest and best people with sufferings, to perfect them in virtue and to give them an opportunity of acquiring still greater merits. With what zeal and solicitude Mary and Joseph seek their child! How troubled are their hearts! how great their anguish! They travel a whole day's journey back to Jerusalem, wander through all the streets, asking every one they meet if he has not seen their lost son Jesus, describing him most minutely; they seek him for three long days without rest or repose, till at

last they are so fortunate as to find him in the temple. Mary, the affectionate mother, can not help exclaiming: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

Christian parents, take an example from Mary and Joseph, and be careful of and solicitous for your children, that they may not suffer shipwreck of their innocence and virtue. Above all things do not allow them to keep bad company, for this is the cause of the corruption even of the best children. I say, therefore, parents must not allow their children to keep company—

I. With frivolous or corrupt persons;
II. With persons of the other sex.

Part I.

If you wish your children to remain pious and innocent, you must forbid them, no matter whether they be young or of more mature age, to be intimate with frivolous or corrupt persons, for such intimacy would be to them the rock on which their virtue would almost necessarily be wrecked.

1. *Young children.* Even adults who converse often with irreligious, immoral persons frequently lose their good principles. How much more this is to be feared with little children, whose principles are not as yet fixed, and who scarcely know what is right or wrong. Imagine a child from six to twelve years of age; it has as yet but little understanding and judgment, and believes whatever you tell it; in its simplicity, which is proper to childhood, it estimates everything of little moment, does not look to loss or gain, or to those considerations which usually deter the adult from committing evil. At the same time it is by nature inclined to evil. What an easy matter it is, therefore, to corrupt it!

Let experience speak. As long as children do not cross the threshold of their parents' house, if they otherwise enjoy a good education, they are polite, pious, simple, modest, and retiring; but as soon as they keep company with bad children or bad grown up persons, many ugly traits come to the surface; they use wicked words, the meaning of which they do not perhaps understand, become stubborn, have no longer any love for prayer, are vain and desirous to please; in a word, the cockle is already sprouting among the wheat. It often happens that even young children, in consequence of bad company, fall into grievous sin. Parents often imagine their children to be innocent angels, when alas! they are already initiated into the mysteries of vice. What a deplorable evil! what grievous consequences!

It is, therefore, a stern duty on the part of parents to keep their young children from all contaminating influences. Witness Sara, who had no rest or peace till Abraham removed Ismael from the house, that her son Isaac might not be corrupted by his society. Act as did this pious mother. Do not permit your children to be always in the streets; such street children are generally the worst, and even in childhood do much mischief. If you learn that your children have been in bad company, reprove them with patience, but with earnestness. Never allow your servants to speak a double-meaning word in the presence of your children or to behave unbecomingly. Even the smallest children have eyes and ears, and everything evil, even if they do not understand it, makes an impression upon them, and will sooner or later have a pernicious effect.

2. *Children of more advanced age.* These require still greater care and solicitude. The years in which they are now are just the most dangerous, for concupiscence is working in them with its fire. Unhappy are those children who at this time fall into bad company! All good principles are lost, the spirit of tho world enters their heart, and leads their steps into the road of perdition. Witness Dina, Jacob's daughter; also the prodigal son. Oh, how many parents are there at present who to their bitter sorrow must share the lot of Jacob and the father of the prodigal.

Their children, formerly so good and obedient, are now entirely changed; they are vain, disobedient, fond of pleasure, desirous to please, living giddily in a giddy world, but dead to God. Whence all this? From bad company. I may say without any exaggeration or fear of contradiction that out of a hundred sons and daughters who, though they were brought up well, follow the ways of wickedness, you will find ninety whose corruption is owing to bad company. Almost all the depravity in our young people originates in outside influences.

I know, Christian parents, that you can not seclude your children from the world, but you can do a great deal towards lessening the world's evil influence upon them, and frequently avert what is most perilous to their souls. But to do so you must exercise the most vigilant care and intelligent zeal. Do not allow your children to associate with persons who do not bear a good name. This is in your power. Do not permit them to visit houses in which there is danger. Allow no going-out after nightfall. Make home pleasant for them, and they will love it and remain there. In this important matter do what is in your power, that when called to an account you may be able to say: I have done for those of my household all that was in my power, and have endeavored to keep my children from being corrupted. It is not my fault it any of them fell into sin. Frequently impress upon them the

words of the Holy Ghost: "My son (my daughter), if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they shall say, Come with us . . . walk not thou with them, restrain thy foot from their paths, for their feet run to evil."—*Prov.* 1: 10. If words have not the desired effect, make use of severity; keep a strict watch over them, in order to discover the danger at the right time, and to avert it.

Part II.

Familiarity with persons of the other sex is very dangerous, perhaps more dangerous to children than keeping company with frivolous and corupt persons. This applies to young as well as to older children.

1. Even quite young children carry within themselves the inclination to sin. Parents should, therefore, exercise a prudent vigilance over them, and not encourage boys and girls to play together. As a rule, boys should play with boys, girls with girls. In the household the mother should carefully see that her girls, even from their tenderest years, are impressed with the necessity of being extremely modest, and this, not only with regard to their brothers and fathers, but even towards one another. In matters of this kind, if the parents be themselves pious and God-fearing, the mother's instinct, directed by her love for God and her love for her children, may be relied on to keep her offspring from danger. But if the mother herself be not a devout woman, then God help the poor children. She can not do her duty by them. Better that they were orphans.

2. A still greater vigilance is necessary with grown-up children. The Holy Ghost says: "Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn? or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? so he who goes into his neighbor's wife shall not be clean."—*Prov.* 6: 27-29. Familiarity with the other sex is the rock on which the strongest virtue is wrecked, as we see in the cases of David, Solomon, Sampson, and numberless others. St. Augustine relates an instance of a man who after having lived chastely twenty-four years in matrimony fell, when forty-eight years of age, owing to his familiarity with a frivolous person. St. Jacob the Penitent lived in the odor of sanctity for fifty years, and even performed miracles, yet he fell because he did not carefully avoid a certain occasion of sin. St. Augustine continues: "Now, if such great and holy men, by familiarity with persons of the other sex, have sinned so grievously, what will happen to young people who entertain such a familiarity? We can say of them, what the Apostle says of the widow who lives luxuriously,

'she appears to live, but she is dead'." Oh! if sons and daughters commence familiarity with persons of the other sex, it is surely a step on the road of vice. St. Ambrose says it is only an inclination, but the inclination, soon becomes a passion, and when passion has taken hold, it blinds the understanding and effects a fall into thousands of sins, in thought, words, and actions. Justly therefore St. Jerome calls familiarity with persons of the other sex "the mortal combat of dying chastity, the tree of sin and the bites of the hellish serpent."

And yet there are parents who permit such dangerous and fatal familiarity to their children, parents who allow the lovers of their daughters to come to their house and sit up with them to unseemly hours. This difficult matter should be dealt with prudently but firmly. While much allowance may be made, no possibility of temptation should be tolerated. Time, and place, and surroundings remain always under the control of the parents. For instance, without hinting at or supposing aught of positive sin, it is certainly wrong of parents, to retire and go to bed, leaving their daughter to entertain her admirer in the parlor till such time as it may please him to go. As the old Latin proverb has it, "He and she alone are not presumed to be saying the rosary." The father and mother in such a case may be only careless or thoughtless. Yes, but a fearful reponsibility is awaiting such careless fathers and mothers in the next world.

But parents forgetful of their duty will say: No harm is done What? If the fire of impure desires burn in their hearts, if they do things which violate holy modesty, is this not wrong? And if the young people continue their familiarity in and outside the house, if they seek the darkness of night for their meetings, and walk together in unfrequented places, will no evil be done?

PERORATION.

To such blind parents I have nothing more to say; but to you, Christian parents, who are reasonable and of good will, I address this earnest admonition: Do not permit your children to keep bad company; you do not allow them to go with persons who have a contagious sickness, but know that there is no more contagious sickness for your children than the company of frivolous and perverse people, and intimate familiarity with persons of the other sex. Numberless children, of whom their parents justly entertained the brightest hopes, have already fallen victims to this disease and lost the life of grace. Oh! by the love you have for your children, and by the account which you must one day give of them, I beg and adjure you to spare neither labor nor pains to avert from them every danger that threatens their soul, that they may grow up in innocence, and advance in wisdom and grace, as in years, before God and man. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS.

And Jesus went down with them, and came to Nazareth: and was subject to them.—Luke 2: 51.

Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, whom the angels adore, was subject, that is, obedient to Mary his Mother, and to Joseph, his foster-father, in all that they commanded him, and in everything that he knew would be pleasing to them. He was obedient, not only in his childhood, but also in his youth, and up to his thirtieth year. Should not this obedience of your Saviour, O ye sons and daughters, encourage you to be obedient to your parents and thus fulfil a duty upon which depends your temporal and eternal welfare? I say, *your temporal welfare,* for God has promised to children who obey their parents happiness and blessings, but has threatened the disobedient and stubborn with evils and perdition. I say, *your eternal welfare,* for whilst, if you are obedient children, you may hope for heaven, if you are disobedient, you can expect nothing but eternal damnation. Strict as is the duty of obedience, it has its limits, and there are cases in which children owe no obedience to their parents, nay, in which they would sin if they did obey them. To instruct you in this important matter, I shall answer the two following questions:

I. In what cases must children obey their parents?
II. In what cases must they not obey them?

PART I.

According to the unanimous teaching of the Fathers of the Church, children owe obedience to their parents—

1. *In things concerning the household.* Children should honor and serve their parents like servants do their masters. "He that feareth the Lord, honoreth his parents, and will serve them as his masters that brought him into the world."—*Eccius.* 3: 8. How do good servants, treat their masters? They do not command but serve; whatever the master orders, they do; they perform the things enjoined upon them, and allow themselves to be employed in everything that the good of the household requires. They

deserve the praise which the centurion in the gospel gives to his servants.—*Matt.* 8: 9. You children owe the same obedience to your parents; you must submit willingly to all their rules, regulations, and ordinances, and without contradiction do what they bid you. Consider the example of Jesus. The holy Fathers and spiritual writers say that he obeyed in all domestic affairs and labors; he carried water, swept the floor, cleared the table, dusted the chairs, assisted Joseph in his shop; in fine, he performed the most menial labors, and it was his pleasure to lend his parents a helping hand wherever they needed his services. If the Son of God humiliated himself so profoundly that he performed the work of a menial, can it be hard for you to do joyfully what your parents command? Could you look up to Jesus without bringing the blush to your cheeks if you were bound to say: Jesus, whom men and angels serve, practiced domestic obedience for thirty years, and I, miserable child of man, will not submit myself to the commands of my parents! I am stubborn, and wish everything should be as I wish; I pretend to understand everything better than my parents; I get into a passion if I do not obtain what I wish. O children, look at the obedience of Jesus; learn how sinful is your self-will, and never again be guilty of disobedience.

2. *In things which regard Christian discipline and good morals.* It is the duty of parents to care for the salvation of their children; they must therefore keep them from evil, and endeavor to make them good Christians. The neglect of this duty would be a grievous sin. From this it naturally follows that, in everything which concerns Christian discipline children owe obedience to their parents. If they forbid them to go to a certain house, the inmates of which do not live like Christians, if they command them to give up certain company, to stay away from dances and gambling, to go to church on Sundays and holidays in the forenoon and afternoon, they are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to obey; for according to the opinion of divines, children commit a mortal sin if they do not obey their parents in things which are necessary for salvation. According to all divines, it is a mortal sin for children to keep company with wicked people of their own sex, to indulge in an intimate familiarity with persons of the opposite sex, to give themselves up to drinking, gambling, immoral pleasures and enjoyments, to dress beyond their means or immodestly, to neglect their duties as Christians, such as hearing the word of God, prayer, confession and communion. Children who are disobedient in these things commit a double sin, the sin of the forbidden action itself and the sin of disobedience. (Illustrate this by example.) From this you see with what great responsibility you burden your conscience if you do not obey your

parents in matters concerning your salvation. Such disobedience will render your dying hour very sad.

3. *In things which their parents order by their last will and testament.* Good parents, even on their death-bed, are solicitous for the good of their children, and give them wholesome advice and directions. The last words and commands of their parents are to good children a sacred legacy which they remember and obey all their life. How scrupulously did not young Tobias execute what his father, when he thought himself near death, had commanded him! How conscientiously did not Joseph, in Egypt, perform the will of his father Jacob! Children should execute most faithfully what their parents have ordered, either by a formal testament or by word of mouth. Those who do not honor the last will of their parents, who do not pay their pious bequests, sin, not only against obedience, but also against justice, and can not obtain grace and forgiveness of God till they have fulfilled the last will of their parents. Even in case the will, owing to a flaw be set aside by a judicial decision, children must obey the testamentary bequests of their parents, if it be certain that they acted with deliberation and free will. These are the three cases in which you owe obedience to your parents.

Part II.

But there are also three cases in which children must not obey their parents.

1. *If the parents command anything against the holy law of God.* In this case, obedience ceases, because parents would no longer act as the agents and representatives of God, but as the instruments of the devil, and the words of the Apostle would apply: "We ought to obey God rather than man."—*Acts* 5: 29. St. Bernard says that the only thing to excuse us from obeying our parents is obeying God himself. "He that loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me." Pious children have at all times observed this precept. They were respectful to their parents and did all they knew would be pleasing to them. But if the parents forgot themselves so far as to command anything sinful, they resisted with noble independence, and suffered the most cruel persecutions, and even martyrdom and death, rather than yield obedience to sinful commands. We have an example to the point in Hermenegild, the son of Leovigild, king of the Visigoths (13. April). You, sons and daughters, must act like this saint. If your parents command you to take a false oath, to lie, steal, or adulterate goods, cheat in dealing with others, dress above your state or immodestly, revile your fellow-men or injure them in their property, you must not obey should they even maltreat

you, drive you out of the house, or disinherit you. In such a case you must console yourselves with the words of Christ: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 10.

2. *If parents forbid them without sufficient cause to perform pious exercises and good works.* There are, alas! worldly-minded parents who, in their blindness, will not suffer their children, to obey the precepts of the Church and to lead a pious life. The children wish to go to confession and communion frequently, enter a sodality, or read a spiritual book, but the parents do not wish it, and forbid such exercises. What must children do? Are they to accomodate themselves to the perverse will of their parents, and obey? No; for if the parents, whose strict duty it is to rear their children in godliness, do the very reverse, they clearly act against the will of God, and obedience in this case is not due to them. Christ goes before us with his example. He was subject to his parents, but when it was a question of fulfilling the will of God, he cared for nothing but the duty which his higher mission imposed upon him. Therefore, to his mother's complaint: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," he answered: "How is it that you sought me? did ye not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

To prevent misunderstanding, I must remark that you, my young friends, must refuse obedience to your parents only when they would prevent you from religious exercises without a reasonable cause. A daughter, for instance, wishes to go to confession and communion every Sunday and holiday, which can not be done without detriment to the household. In such a case the daughter must obey her parents, for the rule is: If the good action which a child intends to do is not commanded under pain of sin, she must obey her parents if they forbid it for a good reason. Even if they forbid the good which is not commanded and not absolutely necessary to salvation, without sufficient cause, the child must obey for the sake of peace. God, who finds more pleasure in obedience than sacrifice, will give to such a child, in recompense for her self-denial, a greater store of graces than if she had insisted on the execution of the good work which she had proposed to herself. **Example:** Catherine of Siena (30 April).

3. *If parents compel them to embrace a state of life for which they have no inclination.* Many parents act in this important matter very unreasonably, and exceed their authority. They wish a daughter to marry a person for whom she has an unconquerable aversion, a union with whom seems to her the most intolerable of evils, or they desire a son to learn a certain trade, or follow a particular profession, for which he has the greatest antipathy,

If parents in such cases insist upon their own will, they do wrong, for if it were the will of God that the children should enter into the state allotted to them by their parents, he would have given them an inclination for it; but since they have no liking at all for it it is a sure sign that God has not called them to that state. Parents who abuse their power, sin greatly, and are responsible before God for all the evil consequences that result therefrom. Their authority goes no further than to assist the child with good counsel. Only when the children choose a state in which, according to the judgment of prudent and experienced people, they would be manifestly unhappy, should parents endeavor by all means to prevent it.

I must, however, Christian children, exhort you in choosing your state of life not to trust too much to yourselves, and obstinately reject all counsel and advice; otherwise it might happen, as experience teaches, that you would make a bad choice, and very bitterly regret that you were so stubborn and self-willed. Your parents have more experience, and have only your welfare at heart; therefore, before you choose a state of life, ask their advice, and act according to it as far as possible.

PERORATION.

You know now in what cases, dear children, you must not obey your parents. But these seldom happen, for most parents love their children sincerely, and ardently desire their temporal and eternal welfare. I wish therefore not so much to admonish you to obey your parents less, but rather to obey them more. Look upon them as the representatives of God, who from the first moment of your life to your departure from this world do so much for you, who for the love of you endure so many hardships, and day and night think of nothing but how to make you happy. Be grateful to them for so many benefits and fulfil your duties toward them, as in duty bound. Give them joy by your obedience and good conduct, that God may give you what he has promised to good children, a long and happy life here and the everlasting joys of heaven hereafter. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

(Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, see Vol. VI.)

EPISTLE. *Rom.* 12: 6-16. Brethren: We have different gifts, according to the grace that is given us, either prophecy, to be used according to the rule of faith; or ministry, in ministering; or he that teacheth, in doctrine, he that exhorteth, in exhorting, he that giveth with simplicity, he that ruleth with carefulness, he that sheweth mercy with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good: loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honour preventing one another; in carefulness not slothful; in spirit fervent; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; instant in prayer; communicating to the necessities of the saints; pursuing hospitality. Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep; being of one mind one towards another; not minding high things, but consenting to the humble. Be not wise in your own conceits.

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1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THREE VIRTUES WHICH WE ARE TO PRACTICE.

The lesson for this day is taken from the ~~Apostle~~ Epistle of St. Paul to the Christians in Rome, and is a continuation of the one which I read and explained to you last Sunday. The Apostle, after general exhortations relative to pious conduct, passes over to particular virtues to be practiced by Christians, of which I shall mention only three:

I. Fidelity to our vocation;
II. Love of our neighbor;
III. Patience.

Part I.

Fidelity to our vocation.

1. The Apostle first admonishes the faithful and their spiritual superiors in Rome to make a proper use of their gifts and offices. He who professes the gift of prophecy, namely, to interpret and explain the Sacred Scripture and to foretell future things, let him take care to announce only that which is inspired by God, and not add his own opinions thereto; he who has a lower office, for instance, the taking care of the sick, let him remain in that office and not force himself into a higher one; he who teaches and exhorts, that is, he who is called to preach the truths of salvation, let him do this without aspiring to a higher office; he who is an elder, that is, a bishop or a priest, let him be solicitous for everything that concerns the welfare of the congregation, and consider this his most important affair: he who gives alms, or performs other works of mercy, let him do it with a good intention and a cheerful heart. In other words, it is the zealous, conscientious fulfilling of the duties of their state of life, or fidelity to their vocation, which the Apostle prescribes to all the faithful.

2. This concerns us all. Whatever our state or condition, we have particular duties which we must fulfil. I am a priest and pastor of souls; as such, I must preach the word of God, administer the sacraments, be solicitous for your salvation. You live in the world and every one of you has particular duties. For instance, as the father or mother of a family you must preserve good discipline among your children and domestics; as children and servants, you must obey your parents, your masters and mistresses; in the single state, you must observe virginal chastity; in the married state, matrimonial love and fidelity; if you be rich, you must give alms; if poor, you must bear your poverty with patience.

3. Much depends upon the conscientious performance of the duties of your state of life, or on your fidelity to your vocation, viz., your own welfare and that of your fellow-men. Proof from Scripture: Tobias and his son; Heli and his sons. Proofs from experience: For good parents—a blessing for their children, for the community, for the whole human race; for wicked parents—misfortunes for their children, for the community, for the whole human race. The same relation exists as between the members of the human body. If every member is sound and performs its functions, all goes well with the whole body; but if only one member fails to do its duty, the whole body is drawn into sympathy and refuses

to act as heretofore. We should consider this well and fulfil all our duties with great fidelity, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of our fellow-men.

PART II.

Love of our neighbor.

St. Paul exhorts us to the love of our neighbor, the qualities of which he describes more minutely. It must be—

1. *Unfeigned.* It is so if, besides being friendly to our neighbor outwardly, we also wish him well in our heart; and if in our acts of kindness we have not so much our own interests in view as his. The Scribes and the Pharisees conducted themselves towards Christ as if they were his greatest friends; they praised him to his face, listened to his discourses seemingly with the greatest attention, laid their doubts before him, and invited him to table; but their hearts were full of deceit and cunning; they hated him and studied how to destroy him. This was hypocritical love. Many Christians act in the same manner. They have honey in their mouths and gall in their hearts; they bless with the mouth and curse with their hearts, they make a great fuss of their neighbor to his face, whilst they feel an aversion for him in their heart; they envy him, and under the mask of apparent friendship lay snares for him. Job says of them: "Dissemblers and crafty men prove the wrath of God."—*Job* 36: 13. Others cherish no spirit of enmity towards their neighbor, and are friendly merely because they expect some favor of him. Even such an interested love is objectionable.

2. *Holy.* "Hate that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good". The true Christian cleaves to that which is good and hates that which is evil, even in those whom he loves; he is not blind to their faults, neither does he sanction them, but he uses every opportunity to remind them of their shortcomings. Christ loved all men, but he did not countenance or overlook their faults, but instructed and reproved them. How often did he not do this with his disciples? Not a few Christians sin against this holy love. If they have a particular inclination for a person they overlook his faults, excuse them, or even speak of them as laudable actions. Thus parents frequently act in regard to their children. Such conduct is not love, but hatred: the friend or child is confirmed in his faults and loses his soul. We must not sanction in a friend, or in our child, that which is evil, but rebuke him for it.

3. *Fraternal.* On account of our origin from the same parents we are all brothers and sisters, but we are such particularly through Jesus Christ, who has elevated us to the dignity of children of God. "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father!"—*Rom.* 8: 15. Wherein does this brotherly love consist? In wishing well and doing well to one another. Brothers and sisters entertain kind feelings towards one another, they rejoice in one another's mutual prosperity, wish well to one another, share with each other their pleasure and sorrow, and assist one another in every necessity. In such a manner we must behave towards one another, because we are all brothers and sisters. The saints cherished this brotherly love. We read in the life of St. Vincent de Paul that there was no kind of distress that he did not approach with kindness. Christians who languished in captivity, slaves of the Turks, children who were exposed, virgins whose innocence was in peril, nuns who had been driven from their convents, fallen women who had been condemned to the galleys, strangers who had been taken ill, the insane, and numberless others, all found through him help and places of refuge. He instituted, for the assistance of the unfortunate, many communities, among which that of the Sisters of Charity is the most widely spread and best known. Alas, many Christians have not the slightest idea of this brotherly love. They are indifferent to the prosperity or adversity of their neighbor; they envy him and wish him evil rather than good; they are hard-hearted and refuse him every act of kindness. This is contrary to brotherly love, for "He that loveth not abideth in death."—*I. John* 3: 14.

4. *Lastly, universal.* We must love all men, without exception, no matter who they may be, or in what relation they stand to us. Reasons: All men have the same Creator, the same Redeemer, and are called to the same eternal beatitude. Christ emphatically requires this univeral love: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven; who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."—*Matt.* 5; 44, 45. Without this universal love we are only nominal Christians, and not distinguished from heathens and unbelievers, for Christ says: "For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this? Be you, therefore, perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."—*Matt.* 5: 46-48. Consider the example of Christ, who offered himself for all men on the cross, and prayed even for his murderers. There must be no one in the whole world towards whom you feel

any aversion or hatred whatever, to whom you wish evil, or towards whom you are indifferent: you must be well disposed toward all, you must pray for all in general, and have the firm purpose of doing them acts of kindness whenever an opportunity presents itself.

PART III.

Patience.

Be patient in tribulation.

1. It is our duty on earth to do the will of God; for this reason Christ bids us say: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God makes his will known to us in a twofold manner; he gives us commandments, and it is his will that we observe them; he sends us various trials and sufferings, and it is his will that by bearing them patiently, we submit ourselves to him. Both have their difficulties, because it is hard for human nature to keep the commandments and to bear things that are disagreeable and painful. If we conquer ourselves and bear everything that is difficult and disagreeable with patience and resignation, we possess the virtue of patience. Example: David (*I. Kings* 24: 8); Tobias (*Tob.* 2: 12, 14); Job (*Job* 2: 12).

2. *Necessity of patience.* The Apostle expresses this in the words: "Patience is necessary for you: that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise," that is, eternal life.—*Heb.* 10: 36. He who wishes to be saved must do the will of God, and he who desires to do this must bear all difficulties connected therewith patiently and resignedly. A proof hereof is Christ, who by sufferings entered into his glory (*Luke* 24: 26); also the saints, who followed Christ on the way of self-denial, mortification, and suffering, and obtained life everlasting. Nothing therefore remains for us, if we wish to be saved, but to imitate the patience of Christ and of the saints.

3. *Means of patience.*

(*a.*) *Hope. — Rejoicing in hope.* He who takes up his cross willingly and follows Christ may hope for life everlasting. Ought not this to sustain every one in the tribulations and hardships of life? Does not the worldling manifest great patience and courage in his worldly pursuits? Why should not we cheerfully make every sacrifice for heaven? "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, patiently bearing till he

receive the early and the latter rain. Be you, therefore, also patient, and strengthen your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth near."—*James* 5: 7, 8. Let us persevere in patience, for heaven is our exceeding great reward.

(*b.*) *Prayer. Be instant in prayer.* Prayer is one of the principal means for obtaining every virtue, therefore that of patience also. God consoles him who prays perseveringly and with confidence, and gives him courage and strength to bear all the hardships of life. Hence David says of himself: "In my trouble I called upon the Lord, and the Lord heard me, and enlarged me."—*Ps.* 117: 5. "There is nothing in this life that could beget a sweeter feeling, fill the heart of man with greater joy, and strengthen him more for noble actions and the bearing of sufferings, than fervent prayer."—*St. Bernard.* Do not, therefore, lose your patience, and in order not to lose it, "pray without ceasing," "pray and faint not."

PERORATION.

Practice these virtues to which the Apostle exhorts you. *Be faithful in your calling* and fulfil the duties of your state of life with perseverance, considering that if you fail in these you can not please God and be saved. *Love your neighbor.* The love of our neighbor is the principal commandment of Christ and the mark by which we are known to be his disciples. *Be patient.* In the prospect of eternal salvation, which is prepared for you, bear with constancy all the trials and tribulations of life, always have recourse to prayer, that God may sustain, comfort and strengthen you. By fidelity to your calling, by the love of your neighbor, and by patience, show that you are worthy followers of Christ, hoping to participate with him in the glory of heaven. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *John* 2: 1-11. At that time: There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is it to me and to thee? my hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them, fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them: Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast. And they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water; the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him; Every man at first setteth forth good wine; and when men have well drank, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF CANA.

On this Sunday our Holy Mother the Church invites her children to accompany their blessed Lord in his public life. Having arrived at the age of thirty years, he came forth from his obscurity at Nazareth, and repairing to the river Jordan, was baptized by John; after which he went into the desert, where he remained for forty days and forty nights, fasting and praying. He then called his first disciples and went with them to Cana of Galilee, which was situated near Nazareth. The occasion was a marriage, of which the gospel of this day speaks. Let us meditate on three prominent incidents of this event:

I. Jesus is a guest at the marriage;
II. The wine failed;
III. Jesus changes water into wine.

PART I.

Jesus is a guest at the marriage.

It may seem strange that Jesus is found at a marriage. Was this a fit place for him? I answer: If the wedding guests had behaved as frivolously and sinfully as they do at some modern weddings, Jesus would certainly not have gone there. But this wedding was celebrated honorably and in the fear of God; the married people and their guests were pious, and their joys innocent. Moreover, Christ had his own particular reasons for honoring this marriage by his presence. And what may have been these reasons?

1. *He would teach us that the married state is one instituted by God,* and not the work of the devil, as some heretics have asserted. At the same time he wished to intimate that it was his intention to raise matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament. For just as he permitted himself to be baptized by John in the river Jordan in order to purify and sanctify the element of water, that it might become in the Sacrament of Baptism a means for the spiritual regeneration of man, so, in like manner, in order to sanctify the nuptial union and raise it to the dignity of a sacrament, he assisted at the wedding. Hence St. Cyril of Jerusalem says: "Jesus came to the marriage, in order that by his presence, and the seal of a great miracle, he might sanctify the beginning of our corporal birth. For as he had come into this world to renew all nature, so he would bless, not only those who were then born, but also the millions yet to be, and prepare for them grace and sanctity at their entrance into life."

2. *He wished to reward the piety of the married couple.* This couple were certainly pius, otherwise they would not have invited Jesus and Mary to their wedding. We may also presume that Jesus would not have gone, if in their single state they had lived forgetful of God and luxuriously, a condition to be deplored in many of the single persons of our day. Oh, that all would invite Jesus to their weddings! Who do invite him to their weddings?

(*a.*) Those Christians who live chastely and piously in the single state.

(*b.*) Those who, in the choice of a partner, look not so much to beauty, money, and other temporal things, as to probity of character and virtue, and who marry with the right intention, so that they can say with young Tobias: "Thou knowest, Lord, that

not for fleshly lust do I take my sister (cousin) to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever."—*Tobias* 8: 9. And with Sara: "Thou knowest, Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust . . . but a husband I consented to take, with thy fear, not with my lust."—*Tobias* 3 : 16, 18.

(*c.*) Those who before marriage devote themselves to prayer, confess and receive communion worthily, in order to receive the holy sacrament of matrimony with a pure conscience and in a state of grace.

(*d.*) Lastly, those who intend in the married state never to violate modesty and decency, to conscientiously fulfil their duties, to be fervent in prayer, and to go frequently to confession and communion.

There are so many unhappy marriages, and whence does it come? Generally, because Christ was not invited to the wedding. Do not fail to invite Jesus to your wedding or into your house. If all the other guests should stay away, the loss would not be so great a misfortune as when Jesus alone absents himself; and if Jesus alone comes, it is worth more than if a hundred other guests were present.

PART II.

The wine failed.

1. The gospel says that the wine failed. Why did the wine fail? Very probably because the married couple were poor, and therefore not able to provide the necessary quantity; moreover the disciples of Christ, who had also been invited, came to the wedding and perhaps a correct estimate had not been formed of the number that would attend.

2. Mary had scarcely noticed the predicament that had come about when she turned to Jesus, saying: *They have no wine.* Behold what an affectionate and merciful mother we have in Mary; she has compassion on us when she sees us in need, and even before asking her intercession she is ready to help us. Oh, let us have great confidence in this Mother of Mercy, and let us ask her intercession in all our necessities; certainly we shall not have recourse to her in vain, for she is the "Comforter of the afflicted," the "Help of Christians." Let us also have a compassionate heart, and assist others willingly and cheerfully whenever and wherever we can.

3. Jesus replied to his mother: *Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.* These words seem harsh, but they are not: they contain no reproach. The word *woman* implies nothing contemptible, for in the Hebrew language, in which Jesus spoke, woman means: Madam, or virgin. By saying, *What is it to me and to thee,* he evidently means to say that he works his miracles, not moved by the love of his mother, but by the will of his heavenly Father, because he had not received his Godhead, which works miracles, from her, but from his Father. And lastly, by saying: *My hour is not yet come,* he means: The hour appointed by my heavenly Father, when the miracle will produce its full effect, when the want of wine will be noticed by all, is not yet come.

From this answer of Jesus to his mother we may learn not to lose courage when God seems not to hear our prayer; he has thereby the best intention; he would exercise us in confidence, give us an opportunity of practicing patience, and induce us to employ his graces and gifts more profitably. Let us be instant in prayer; the help of God will be nearest when the necessity is greatest.

4. Mary acted thus; she perceived the mysterious meaning of his words, and was so confident of her petition being granted, that she said to the waiters: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.* Here we see how rightly the Church acts in invoking the Blessed Virgin. Mary is indeed mighty, and I am tempted to call her "almighty," certainly not by nature, as is God, but as regards her intercession; for God does not refuse her any request. And why? Because she is the Mother of God. What will not the intercession of Mary avail, when the intercession of the saints avails so much? "The prayer of the just man availeth much." And yet the prayer of the just man and of the saints are only prayers of the servants of God, whilst the prayer of Mary is the prayer of his own Mother, the Queen of Heaven. Let us then trust in Mary, but let us not forget her admonition: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.* We must do, as a condition, what Jesus requires of us: "Keep the commandments." How could we expect that Mary would pray for those who are the enemies of her Son, and never cease by their sins and vices to crucify him anew? Let no one deceive himself: it is in vain for the impenitent sinner to trust in Mary.

PART III.

Jesus changes water into wine.

1. *There were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece.* The Jews never sat down to table without having previously washed their hands: they also washed their plates, cups, and other vessels before they used them; they were accustomed to make these purifications several times during their meals, for which purpose the water-pots were there.

Jesus ordered these six water-pots, which, on account of the free use of water for the purification of the guests, had become partly empty, to be filled up to the brim. He did not himself fill them up, nor did he let his disciples do it, but the waiter did it, in order to remove all suspicion that wine, instead of water, had been poured in, and to raise the miracle above every doubt. After the waiters had filled the water-pots he said to them: *Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast.* The steward tasted it, and behold! it was pure wine. Jesus had performed a miracle; he had, without moving a finger or revealing his almighty will by a word, changed water into wine. The steward knew not whence it was, for he was otherwise occupied, and had no knowledge of what Jesus had said or done; he, therefore, called the bridegroom, believing that he had procured the wine and said to him: *Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank, then that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

2. The world sets before its friends good wine at first; it offers them pleasures and enjoyments of every kind, and afterwards it sets before them bad, bitter wine, a drink of aloes; for poverty, shame, disease, and other temporal evils, remorse of conscience, a hard and perhaps an unhappy death, are the consequences of the worldly pleasures which have been indulged in. Christ deals differently with his friends: he first sets before them bitter wine; he requires mortification, self-denial, the carrying of the cross; but afterwards he sets before them precious wine, for in lieu of the joys of the world which they renounced for his sake he gives them even here below a comfort and a peace that surpass all understanding, and hereafter invites them to the everlasting joys of heaven. Oh, who would not reject the chalice which the world offers and drink of the chalice which Christ offers and of which he himself drank?

3. St. John remarks at the end of the gospel of this day: *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and he manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.* The meaning thereof is: This was the first miracle which Jesus wrought. The object which he had in view in the performance of the miracle was to manifest himself as the Son of God and the promised Redeemer of the world, that men might believe in him and become sharers in the fruits of the Redemption. His disciples already believed in him, but their faith was increased and strengthened by the miracle which he performed at Cana before their eyes. This miracle, as well as the other countless miracles which Christ performed, and which have been performed in his name in the Church throughout all centuries down to our own time, should be to us also an immovable ground and pillar of our faith.

PERORATION.

In conclusion, let me ask two questions:

1. Why did Jesus change water into wine as his first miracle? To show by a symbol what his coming upon earth was to effect. As water was changed into wine, so men who lived in lukewarmness and forgetfulness of their salvation are changed into zealous servants of God.

2. Why did Jesus perform his first miracle at the wedding-feast in Cana? Why not on some other occasion? To indicate that men, who by sin had been separated from him, should, through his merits, again be united and spiritually wedded to him, like the bride and bridegroom on that wedding-day. May these happy espousals and this spiritual union be effected in us, and continue, not only for time, but for all eternity! Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE A SACRAMENT.

Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage.—John 2: 2.

It was not without deep meaning that Jesus appeared at the marriage in Cana and there performed his first miracle. God himself had instituted matrimony. After he had created Adam and Eve he blessed them and said to them: "Increase and multiply and fill the earth."—*Gen.* 1: 28. Adam and Eve were to live together in the nuptial state, in order that the human race might be propagated and the earth filled with inhabitants. This union originally instituted by God, was, however, only a natural one, and the blessing which God gave it referred only to the propagation of the human race and to temporal goods, but was destitute of a supernatural and sanctifying power. Christ, who had come to ennoble man and to make of a carnal people a holy people, who should complete the number of the elect in heaven, conferred on matrimony a greater dignity, he made it an image of his own union with the Church, attached to it supernatural graces, and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament. And this is what he would indicate when he appeared at the marriage-feast at Cana and by a miracle changed water into wine. I shall today explain the contents of the gospel as bearing on the sacrament of matrimony, and I shall show you—

I. That Christian marriage must be a sacrament;
II. That it is really a sacrament.

PART I.

When I say that Christian marriage is a sacrament, I exclude all marriages of non-Christians, such as heathens, Jews, Mohammedans; in a word, of all that are not baptized; for baptism, as the Council of Florence teaches, is the first of all the seven sacraments, the entrance into the spiritual life, by which we are incorporated with the Church. The unbaptized have no relation with Christ or his Church; they can not therefore participate in the graces and means of salvation which Christ has acquired and

deposited in his Church. The marriages of non-Christians are only natural unions or contracts, and are consequently destitute of sacramental dignity and grace. Moreover, when I say that Christian marriage is a sacrament, it is to be understood in the sense that every marriage lawfully and validly entered into among Christians is a sacrament, and that if this sacrament be received with the proper dispositions it confers supernatural graces. For, being a sacrament of the living, matrimony increases sanctifying grace and imparts to the married couple special graces by which they are enabled to live together in mutual love and fidelity, and to bring up their children for God and heaven. Now the question is: Why *must* matrimony be a sacrament? I answer—

1. *Because it is indissoluble.* Even in the beginning matrimony was indissoluble. If afterwards God allowed the Israelites to dissolve their matrimonial unions, it was done only "on account of their hardness of heart," as Christ expressly says. In the New Law, Christ restored matrimony to its primitive state; therefore a separation is not permissible. Hence our Saviour says: "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." —*Mark* 10: 2-9. Christian marriage must be indissoluble, because, as I shall show you presently, it is an image of the union of Christ with his Church; for as Christ will always remain united with the Church, so no separation can take place between married people, otherwise their marriage would be not be an image of the union of Christ with his Church. From this it necessarily follows that matrimony must be a sacrament; for if it were only a natural union or contract, entered into for the procreation of children, no reason could be assigned why, in the case of barrenness, it should not be allowable to dismiss the woman and marry another. The same may be said if matrimony were only a remedy against concupiscence, for in that case we could see no reason why a poor, emaciated, sickly woman should not be dismissed and another taken. But if matrimony is principally indissoluble because it is an image of the union of Christ with his Church, it is a sign of grace, and consequently a sacrament.

2. *Because it is instituted for the propagation of the human race.* Now, this object is not obtained by the mere procreation of children; they must also be reared and educated. Precisely in this is matrimony distinguished from the sexual intercourse of animals. But it is not enough merely to rear children to be fit and useful members of human society; it is also the duty of Christian parents to implant virtue, religion, and the fear of God in the hearts of their offspring, in order that they may attain to their eternal destiny. It is not difficult to perceive that parents can not fulfil

this important duty without the special help of divine grace God never enjoins on us duties without giving us at the same time the necessary grace for the performance of them. Both reason and faith teach that truth. Now, if matrimony confers such a grace, it *must* be a sacrament.

3. *Because by divine ordinance it is a remedy against concupiscence.* Now, it is an incontrovertible truth that a matrimonial union destitute of the aid of divine grace is not a sufficient remedy against incontinence, because the concupiscence of the flesh, in consequence of the matrimonial life, is rather inflamed than extinguished. And if anything were wanting to confirm the assertion made, as well as the reason just stated for its being true, we have but to look at the facts of current history as revealed in the daily press. No, brethren, marriage, simply as such, without the aid of divine grace, is not an all-sufficient remedy against concupiscence. It was, therefore, necessary for those who enter into matrimony, that Christ should attach special graces to it and raise it to the dignity of a sacrament. The sacramental grace is an indemnification for the indulgence which God granted to married people in the Old Law, allowing them to remove the danger of incontinence by a dissolution of matrimony, or even by polygamy.

4. *Because the married couple have very responsible duties towards each other.* Since Christian marriage is an image of the union of Christ with his Church, the married couple ought to deal with each other as Christ deals with his Church. As Christ unceasingly loves, purifies, and sanctifies his Church, so the husband must be devoted to his wife in holy love; and as the Church is obedient to her divine Founder in faithful love, so the wife must be subject to her husband in love and obedience. And as Christ never forsakes his Church, and the Church never becomes unfaithful to her Bridegroom, so married people should remain united in inviolable fidelity under all circumstances of life. But married people can not fulfil these duties of themselves; they need a special grace. Who will believe that God would impose duties on married people without giving the grace necessary to fulfil them? How could this be reconciled with his goodness and justice? No, God commands no impossibility; he assists us with his grace, so that in every situation of life we can fulfil his will. Consequently, he gives to those who enter into matrimony the grace of fulfilling the duties which they, as married people, must fulfil; therefore, matrimony must be united with special graces, and is necessarily a sacrament.

These and other reasons which might be adduced justify the conclusion that Christian matrimony is not merely a human, civil contract, but a sacrament. *And it really is a sacrament.*

Part II.

That Christian marriage is a sacrament is proved—

1. *By Sacred Scripture.* St. Paul emphatically calls matrimony in the Church a great mystery, that is, a sacrament. He says: "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church . .; therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it, that he might sanctify it . . . So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies . . . For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church."—*Ephes.* 5: 23-32. As you see, the Apostle represents matrimony as an image of the union of Christ with his Church: he represents the husband as Christ, and the wife as the Church, and concludes from this that Christian married people must conduct themselves towards each other as Christ does towards the Church and the Church again towards him, and then says: "This is a great sacrament (mystery), but I speak in Christ and in the Church;" in other words, this is the idea he wishes to convey: Matrimony, considered from the Christian standpoint, is a great sacrament, because it is an image, a visible sign, of the union of Christ with his Church. Now, if the nuptial state, as the Apostle says in plain words, is a visible sign, an image, of the union of Christ with his Church, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that it is a sacrament. The union of Christ with his Church is full of grace, for he has loved and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her. This must also be the case with Christian matrimony, because otherwise it would not be a true image of the union of Christ with his Church. Now, if it is united with grace, it is evidently a sacrament.

2. *By the tradition of the Church.* Even Tertullian (A. D. 215) mentions matrimony with baptism, confirmation, and the Blessed Eucharist, and says that the words of the Apostle just quoted must be understood of matrimony as a sacrament. Origen, St. Athanasius, and St. Chrysostom say that a particular grace is imparted to the nuptial union. This could not be the case if it were only a natural union and not a sacrament. St. Ambrose requires that the matrimonial union be sanctified by the priestly blessing, and says that an adulterer can have no part in this sacrament, because he loses by this crime the grace of matrimony. He therefore, expressly calls it a sacrament, in the proper sense and

meaning of the word, because, he adds, it is connected with grace. A cotemporary of St. Ambrose, Pope Siricius, says that those married men who during the lifetime of their wives enter into a new marriage, commit a *sacrilege*. The Pope could not have said this if *marriage were merely a civil contract*, for one does not become guilty of a sacrilege by the violation of such a contract; but one does become guilty of this crime by the abuse of a sacrament. St. Augustine calls matrimony a sacrament in numberless places. That this great Doctor of the Church, when speaking on matrimony, made use of the word sacrament in its proper and restricted sense is evident among other reasons from the fact that he calls only the marriage of the Christians, and not that of the heathens, a sacrament, and speaks and treats of it just as he does of baptism.

In the midst of a beautiful comparison between matrimony and baptism, he draws a parallel and says that "the sacrament of matrimony in those who separate from each other, and enter into another marriage, remains similar to the baptism of those who have fallen from the faith." The Councils also declare this doctrine of the Fathers of the Church. The third Lateran Council, held in theyear 1179, forbids the receiving of money for the administration of the sacraments, among which matrimony is mentioned. The second Council of Lyons, 1274, enumerates matrimony as one of the seven sacraments. The same may be said of the Councils of Constance and of Florence, while the great Ecumenical Council of Trent emphatically declares: "If any one assert that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, instituted by Christ, but that it was invented by men, and does not give grace, let him be anathema." —*Sess.* 24, *Con. I.*

3. *Lastly the Greek Church and all ancient sects.* The innovators of the sixteenth century laid their confession of iaith before Jeremias, the patriarch of Constantinople, and endeavored to bring the Greek Church over to their side. After reading it carefully the patriarch remarked that he could not unite with them, and among other objections remarked that they did not consider matrimony as a sacrament, whereas the Greek Church had from the beginning held it as such. Later on the Protestants succeded in winning over the patriarch Cyril Lukaris, and prevailed on him to reject like themselves all the sacraments, with the exception of baptism and the Last Supper. But the Greeks resisted this innovation with all their power, and the Council of Constantinople, held in the year 1683, excommunicated the patriarch and solemnly declared that the Greek as well as the Latin Church recognized matrimony as a sacrament. The Kopts, Jacobites, Nestorians, and Syrians, who separated from the Church in

the fifth century consider matrimony to be a sacrament, a proof that it has been thus viewed from the beginning.

PERORATION.

Thus the Sacred Scripture tradition, and those religious societies separated centuries and centuries ago from the Church, convince us that matrimony is a true sacrament, instituted by Christ. From what has been said, you can easily comprehend the nature and effects of what they call civil marriage. Catholics who dare to be married in such a manner turn their back upon Christ and his Church. They renounce Jesus Christ as they renounced the devil at their baptism. When the question was put: "What dost thou ask of the Church of God?" the sponsors replied for them, "Faith." They now fling faith and the Church of God to the dogs. They will none of it. They do not want the sacrament. They merely want to have their unholy union legalized before men. At that turning-point of their lives, doubtless the most important of all others, and when most they need the grace of God, they boldly and impiously defy him. They know the law of God on the subject. They know that marriage is a sacrament, that it is one of those seven blessed channels through which the merits of the blood poured out on Calvary flow to our souls. But enough, what do such a couple care for sacrilege? They have renounced Christ, his Church, his sacraments—let them go. They are henceforth to the Church, and to the children of the Church but as the heathen and the publican. God forbid that any of the young people of this parish ever become so demented, ever so unblushingly follow in the footsteps of Judas Iscariot. Ged forbid that a child of worthy parents, a child to whom the faith and fidelity to his Church has been transmitted through a long line of the most steadfast upholders of the cause of Christ and his Church against all the powers of earth and hell—God forbid that such a child should be branded as a traitor and renegade. Far be from us any such shame. Regard marriage as what it is, a sacrament —a holy, grace-giving sacrament. It should be reverently prepared for, and received in a state of grace. The Church is the dispenser of the sacraments, and only at the hands of God's minister, imparting by authority God's blessing, should the holy sacrament of matrimony be received.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE CEREMONIES OF MATRIMONY.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.—John 2: 1.

The gospel of this day speaks of a marriage which took place in Cana of Galilee, at which Jesus, with his mother and disciples, was present. The ceremonies prescribed for Jewish marriages were very impressive. They bore a great resemblance to funeral ceremonies; for as these lasted seven days, so did those of marriage. The bride received from the bridegroom precious ointments. The bridegroom received from the bride a winding-sheet, which he was obliged to wear every year, on the anniversary of his marriage. The bride, accompanied by music, was taken from her house, and conducted by ten virgins to her new home. The same was done at funeral processions; the corpse was taken to the grave with an accompaniment of plaintive music and with torches. The last festivity was on the thirtieth day, when the newly-married female ceased to be called a *bride*, and was afterwards addressed by the title of Madam, or simply Woman. This also reminds us of the funeral service, which was closed on the thirtieth day. The ceremonies of Christian marriages have no resemblance to those of funerals; nevertheless, they are of a very serious nature, representing, as they do, the great significance of matrimony and the duties which it imposes on the newly-married.

We will to-day consider attentively the procedings and ceremonies —

I. Before marriage;
II. During the marriage;
III. After marriage.

PART I.

The proceedings and ceremonies which precede the marriage may be divided into remote and proximate.

1. *The remote are—*

(*a.*) *The examination of the bride and bridegroom.* The pastor investigates the case, in order to see if there be any impediment to their marriage. He then examines them in their religion, to satisfy himself that they possess the necessary knowledge of Christian doctrine. Lastly, he explains to them the duties of the state they are about to embrace, exhorting them in every doubt to seek information in the confessional.

(*b.*) *The espousals* [local]. These consist in their promising before the pastor and two witnesses, to marry each other at some future time. The pastor asks the bride and bridegroom whether it be their intention to promise to marry each other, and at a certain time to be married publicly. They answer: "Yes, I will; I promise it; that is my intention." Then they give each other their hands, and the priest says: "May the Lord confirm what he has operated in you, in the name of the Father, etc." Lastly, he addresses them briefly, exhorting them to the fear of God and to holy purity, and urging them to prepare themselves for the sacrament of matrimony by the worthy reception of the sacrament of penance and the Blessed Eucharist.

(*c.*) *The publication of the bans,* which according to the ordinance of the Council of Trent, must take place on three successive Sundays or festivals, unless for a good reason a dispensation be obtained. The bans are published to discover impediments, and to give the faithful an opportunity of praying for the couple.

2. *The proximate are as follows.*

(*a.*) On the day of the marriage the betrothed go to the church, accompanied by two or three witnesses and the invited guests. In former times there were special bridegroom attendants, or groomsmen and bridesmaids, called paranymphs, whose duty it was to be counsellors and guardians of their chastity during the time of their engagement, to instruct them in the duties of the married state, to assist them at the marriage, and after the ceremony to accompany them home. Two or three witnesses are necessary for entering lawfully and validly into matrimony, wherever the Council of Trent has been published, as it has been in most Catholic countries.—*Counc. Trid., sess.* 24, *de reform., c.* 1.

(*b.*) The priest, who administers the sacrament of matrimony, having come to the altar, the betrothed go to him, with their witnesses, to receive the blessing. By this they express their belief that matrimony is a sacrament, and that it must be entered into with the blessing of the Church. This was the doctrine of the Church from the beginning. Tertullian said that it was impossible

for him to describe the happiness and dignity of matrimony, "which the Church regulates, the sacrifice confirms, the blessing seals, the angels announce, and the eternal Father declares valid."

(*c.*) The bride appears *with a wreath on her bare head*, provided she be still a virgin. This custom is very ancient, for Pope Nicholas mentions it as early as the ninth century. As conquerors were decorated with wreaths, the wreath of the bride indicates that she has overcome all the enemies that laid snares for her chastity, and that as a virgin she stands at the altar. The bride wears the wreath *on her bare head*, to signify that she is still free, for the bare head is a symbol of liberty and dominion; therefore men appear in church bareheaded; women on the contrary must not have the head uncovered. In early times the bride was covered with a veil as soon as she was married, to indicate that she had lost her liberty and was now subject to her husband. The bridegroom stands at the altar on the *right*, the bride on the *left side*. By this position is indicated that the husband is the head and that the woman must be subject to him.—*Gen.* 3: 16.

(*d.*) The officiating priest makes a short address, in which he declares that the betrothed had already promised to marry each other, and are now about to carry out their promise. After calling three times upon those present to reveal any impediment to the marriage known to them, he explains the object of matrimony, and that it is a true sacrament. After this he says a mental prayer for the couple to obtain for them God's grace and blessing.

PART II.

Now the marriage ceremony proper begins. The officiating priest vested in a surplice and white stole, asks: "N. N., wilt thou take N. N., here present, for thy lawful wife, according to the rite of our holy Mother the Church?" He responds: "I will." Then the priest ask the bride: "N. N., wilt thou take N. N., here present, for thy lawful husband, according to the rite of our holy Mother the Church?" She answers: "I will." The language used must be the *vernacular*, that is, the language of the contracting parties' own country or the language they speak. Then the woman, if she has never been married before, uncovers her hand, but if she is a widow, she keeps it covered, or gloved. The bridegroom then, extending his right hand ungloved, takes her right hand, and plights his troth in these beautiful and solemn words: "I, N. N., take thee, N. N., to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us

part, if holy Church will it permit, and thereto I plight thee my troth." Then they loose their hands; and, joining them again, the bride repeats after the priest the very same words. Their troth being thus pledged, and their right hands still clasped, the priest says: "I join you together in marriage, in the name of the Father (†), and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen," and they are married. He then sprinkles them with holy water. Then follows the beautiful ceremony of the blesssing and putting on of the ring.

The giving of the marriage-ring was customary at all times, and we find it in use even among the Jews and Pagans. In the beginning, the ring seems to have been constructed of iron, later on of gold, or at least it was gilt. Iron, the strongest metal, was emblematic of strength, and signified that conjugal love and fidelity ought to be as strong as iron. Iron, however, will corrode or rust; gold never does; consequently, the gold marriage-ring reminds the married couple of the duty of preserving their mutual love and fidelity as incorruptible as gold.

The ring is round, a diminutive circle, an emblem of eternity, without beginning and without end. It is emblematic of what their conjugal love and fidelity to each other should be to the day of death, one continual, uninterrupted whole. The woman wears it on her left hand, the hand that is nearer the heart, which is the seat of love and affection; and on the fourth finger, counting from the thumb, because on that finger she will find it the least hindering or embarrassing in her domestic work, and to remind her that she is not to give herself up to idleness, but that she should be active and industrious, like the strong woman mentioned in the Sacred Scripture and whom the Holy Ghost praised. —*Prov.* 31: 10. The grasping of each other's hands is a mutual confirmation of their fidelity, as well as a sign that they will work together and assist each other as much as they can, and that hand in hand they will make the journey of life together. The priest then blesses the ring and sprinkles it with holy water, in the form of a cross, and the bridegroom, having received it from the hand of the priest, gives gold and silver tothe bride, saying: "With this ring I thee wed; this gold and silver I thee give, with my body I thee worship; and with all my worldly goods I thee endow. Then the bridegroom places the ring on the thumb of the left hand of the bride; saying, "in the name of the Father", then on the second finger, saying, "and of the Son"; then on the third finger, saying, "and of the Holy Ghost;" lastly on the fourth finger, saying, "Amen." And there he leaves the ring. After this, if the nuptial blessing is to be given, mass is said, a special one for the occasion, as given in the Missal, and everything therein prescribed is observed.

PART III.

After the *Pater Noster*, the priest, standing at the Epistle side of the altar, turns round, faces the married couple, who are kneeling at the foot of the altar, and pronounces two beautlful nuptial blessings, in which, among other things, he implores God to pour upon their marriage the fullness of his blessing, that they may enjoy a long life, in peace and happiness, serve him faithfully, preserve conjugal chastity, rear their children in piety and the fear of God, and obtain eternal salvation. In the second prayer, the virtues necessary for the woman are prayed for. After these two prayers, the priest turns to the middle of the altar und resumes the holy sacrifice. Now, it is a remarkable fact, that this is the only instance in which, in ordinary circumstances, after the Offertory, the Church permits her ministers to break off from the performance of the sacrifice. If it seem astonishing to many that Christ so honored matrimony as to turn aside from his public life, and dignify it by his presence at Cana of Galilee, what shall we say when he permits his ministers to break off in the midst of this stupendous sacrifice, turn aside, and as it were, leave it unfinished!

Well did St. Paul know whereof he spoke, when he said: "This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ, and in the Church." —*Ephes.* 5: 32. After he has received the Precious Blood, the priest gives communion to the married couple, and then proceeds to finish the mass.

Immediately before blessing the congregation he pronounces another blessing over the newly-married, in which he petitions God to replenish them with his blessings, that they may see their children to the third and fourth generation and obtain life everlasting.

These blessings, however, are not given, if the bride had been married before, or if the marriage be entered into at forbidden times. Those betrothed, therefore, unless urgent reasons demand it, ought not to marry at forbidden times, in order not to deprive themselves of the nuptial blessing. After mass it is customary to offer blessed wine to the couple. [Local.] Wine is the emblem of joy, and blessed wine is the pure joy, the holy love, which they ought to have for each other. And as wine improves with age and becomes better, so their love must not grow cold with the lapse of time, but become stronger, purer, and holier. The custom existing among the Greeks is very expressive: they break the vessel out of which the wine is drunk, to signify that the party who becomes guilty of infidelity, like the broken vessel, is to be cast off.

PERORATION.

Begin, then, your marriage-day with God, and take care lest you end it with the devil. This is a holiday for you; spend it in the fear of God and innocent joy, as becomes Christians.

As long as they live the wedding-day should be a memorial day for married people. They ought to keep and celebrate it every year by hearing mass, by confessing and receiving communion. Commend yourselves daily to the protection of God and ask him to give you the necessary grace for the faithful performance of your duty, that in your difficult state you may work out your salvation. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

TRIALS IN THE MARRIED STATE.

There were set there six water-pots of stone.—John 2: 6.

In the account given in the gospel of the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee we find mention made of six water-pots. Our divine Saviour performed a great miracle by changing the water, with which these vessels had been filled, into wine. We frequently find these water-pots also at other marriages; for they signify the trouble and afflictions with which not a few married people are visited. St. Paul directs the attention of married people to these afflictions when he says: "If thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned, and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned; nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh."—*I. Cor.* 7: 28. In the married state, all that glitters is not gold. It is, however, in the power of married people to do what Jesus did with the water in the pots; they can, if they be of good will, change the water of tribulation into the wine of comfort and joy. Let us to-day consider the trials incident to the married state, and see how the water may be changed into wine.

PART I.

The first affliction is the unfruitfulness of some marriages.

There are some marriages which are not blessed by God with children. This is certainly an affliction for many people, especially for those who are blessed with worldly goods, and is a great privation. Some of the best people that ever lived have experienced this sad destitution. Witness Abraham, who, when God promised him a great reward, sadly replied; "Lord God, what wilt thou give me? I shall go without children."—*Gen.* 15: 2. "If thou givest me all riches, what shall it profit me? I have no children to inherit my riches." Rachel, Jacob's wife, was grieved so much over her sterility that she wished to die rather than to live and see herself without children.—*Gen.* 30: 1.

The pious couple Elkana and Anna were in great tribulation because they had no children.—*I. Kings* 1. Married people thus situated frequently think within themselves: We have considerable property and all would be well, but we have no child, and there is no one to lisp the sweet name of father and mother. This is a heavy load on their hearts. How can such childless couples comfort themselves? They must become convinced—

(*a.*) *That it is the will of God.* Whatever God wills and does is for the best. Perhaps their children, if they had any, might degenerate, embitter their life, cause a great deal of mischief in the world, and finally perish eternally. In such a supposition is it not better to have no children?

(*b.*) *That they can live much more quietly.* How much labor and anxiety do not children cause their parents! How much does it not cost to rear them, to provide for them, and to preserve them from the corruption of the world! And what grief and sorrow for Christian parents to be obliged to see that all their labors and efforts for the temporal and eternal welfare of their children are not unfrequently fruitless! It is only too true; few children, few crosses; many children, many crosses. How well off, then, are those who have no children! They are free from the great burden of their education, and can themselves live and die quietly.

(*c.*) *That they can the more easily save their souls.* Parents have a great many duties to perform towards their children, and if they neglect but one of these solemn duties, a most rigorous account awaits them. Many parents will be damned on account of the sins of their children. Heli was in other respects a righteous

man, and if he had had no children would perhaps have been saved; but his two wicked sons dragged him down to hell. Considering this, ought married people to consider themselves unhappy because they have no children?

(*d.*) *That they can do a great deal of good with their temporal substance.* It is the sacred duty of parents who have children to provide for them; therefore they can do but little in the way of charity, and even if they could, they fear that their children may not have enough, or that they may some day be in want; consequently they hoard up for them. But this is not the case with childless couples; they can, if they be rich and have the good will, do a great deal of good towards alleviating the corporal and spiritual necessities of their fellow-men; they can acquire much merit before God, and call down upon themselves the blessing of heaven. What seems water, therefore, to such childless, couples, may, by a little reflection and a spirit of piety and resignation, be turned into the richest wine.

Part II.

The second affliction is bad, worthless children.

There always have been children who, as they advance in years, degenerate more and more, give themselves up to impurity, drunkenness, and gambling, and behave rudely, ungratefully, and stubbornly, heaping up shame and disgrace upon their parents. There are such also in our days, for we see bad examples and scandals multiplied and the world sinking deeper and deeper into forgetfulness of God. Can there be a greater cross or affliction for parents than bad children? History records that the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius died of grief and a broken heart, because his son Commodus led a most scandalous life and gave promise of doing a great deal of mischief in the world. Many fathers and mothers can say to their ungodly children what Jacob said to his sons: "You will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to hell."—*Gen.* 42: 38. Truly, impious children are a pot that is filled with the tears of their parents, and this pot is set in the houses, not only of bad, but also of good parents. Adam and Eve had their Cain; Noe, his Cham; and David, his Absalom.

How can parents who have wicked children comfort themselves in their deplorable situation? They must spare neither labor nor pains to reclaim their erring children from their evil ways; they must entreat, reprove, and rebuke them with patience and earnestness, give them good example, and fervently pray for their conversion. If the parents fulfil their duties with proper zeal,

they may succeed in winning back their wayward children; and this will be a great comfort to them. They must not, however, lose courage when their efforts to reclaim their children are not immediately crowned with success. How many years did not St. Monica instruct and admonish, pray and weep, before she had the happiness of seeing her son Augustine converted! And if all exertions prove fruitless, let the father and mother comfort themselves with the thought that they have done their duty and that the sins of their children will not be laid to their charge. They may also think of God, our heavenly Father, who has so many rebellions children, and yet he treats then with indulgence and infinite kindness.

PART III.

The third affliction is jealousy.

This is, perhaps, the greatest evil in the married state. Married people who give way to this passion are always full of disquietude and suspicion; the most harmless and innocent circumstance appears to them suspicious; they listen to every word, observe every step, get excited at the most trifling thing, and torment themselves with melancholy thoughts day and night. The domestic affairs suffer loss; the education of the children is neglected; not unfrequently there are quarrels and contentions, and matrimonial love is changed into coldness—often to hatred. It sometimes even leads to the murder of one of the parties. Oh, that there were no such trials in any Christian family! Married people must avoid everything that might give occasion to jealousy. Wives must be prudent, when in company with men, and not be over free with them, especially those who are regarded suspiciously by the husband. They must not show an undue leaning or friendship for any man, nor permit any man in public or private to bestow on them marked attention or extraordinary courtesies. Finally, they must scrupulously avoid and shun all places and company that bear a sullied reputation, live in a retired way, and treat their husbands affectionately and kindly. In like manner husbands must not be too familiar with doubtful characters, never go to questionable places, nor be too friendly with female servants. In order to avoid jealousy, married people should observe the word of our Lord: "Judge not."—*Luke* 6: 37. Charity obliges us to think well of others until we are convinced we have unmistakable reasons to think the contrary. This applies particularly to married people. If a suspicious thought arise, they ought to recall to their mind the reproach which Christ made to the Pharisees: "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"—*Matt.* 9: 4. Lastly, they ought not to listen to whisperers who, under

the cloak of friendship, reveal what they suppose to be suspicious things in regard to the other party, but should reject them at once. Moreover, I would advise persons who are prone to jealousy, to reveal their character to their confessor and punctually obey his directions.

Part IV.

The fourth affliction is disunion and discord.

There are not a few married people with whom the spirit of dissension prevails. Instead of loving each other, they are averse to each other, seldom speak in a friendly manner, but quarrel and reproach each other continually, while for days and weeks a kind word does not pass between them. When they are together, they wish mountains separated them; and when absent from each other, they look forward with horror and dread to the hour when they shall have to meet again. The matrimonial bond often becomes to them so burdensome and hateful that they wish themselves dead. How unhappy are such married people! Their life on earth is already, as it were, a hell. And what evils follow this disunion and discord! Their children become wicked, because they are not brought up properly; the domestic concerns suffer, and God, who is a God of peace, withdraws his blessing from such contentious people.

How can these bitter waters be changed into wine, or cast out of the house? Such a couple must, first of all, endeavor to remove the causes of their discord. The man is, perhaps, irritable, keeps late hours, is a drunkard, a gambler, an adulterer—hence discord and disunion in the house. The wife is not economical, is careless in the discharge of her duties, fond of dress, arbitrary, sharp-tongued—hence the discord. The first business, on both sides, is to go to the root of the evil. They must look at the primary causes of their dissensions. Only when this is done can they hope for peace or comfort with one another. They should both call to mind that neither is a saint, that neither took the other for such at the altar, but for plain flesh and blood. It is preposterous for either to expect the other to be perfect. They each know that neither one nor the other is, nor will be, without faults and frailties, and, therefore each should bear with the other in patience and charity. If you see something in the other party which displeases you, do not get into a rage, but speak in a gentle, friendly manner. You will catch more flies with a few drops of honey than with a barrel of vinegar. And if you think it necessary to rebuke your partner, do so at the proper time. Observe silence so long as the other party is excited, and speak only after he or she has calmed down and is open to reason. If,

from whatever cause, the matrimonial peace has been disturbed, be reconciled without delay, and let not the sun go down on your anger.

PART V.

The fifth trial is poverty and need.

This is a trial found now-a-days in many houses. Everything desirable or necessary for life is more or less wanting, namely, a *domicile*, especially in large cities, where many families are turned into the street because they cannot pay the rent; *food* is wanting, and husband and wife, notwithstanding all their hard work and the greatest economy, must sometimes suffer hunger with their children; they want *clothes*, or those they have are often in such a condition that they are ashamed to go out; in winter they have no *fuel*, in consequence of which they almost freeze to death. Through the year they have many unavoidable expenses; they often need many dollars, when they have only as many cents in the house. Taxes and debts have to be paid, but there is no money to meet these expenses; mortgages fall due, are foreclosed, and their little property, the accumulation of years of economy, is sold, and so forth.

How can this be avoided? It is difficult to give advice on this point. I will make only a few remarks.

Many are poor because they are lazy and improvident; they are themselves the cause of their poverty. A man who has willing hands can generally find remunerative employment and gain a livelihood. You must make hay while the sun shines; you must be saving and economical when you have money; this is the virtue of prudence, for there is no virtue in not spending money when you have none to spend. People, generally, do not think of saving in times of prosperity, imagining that the good times will last for ever; then when adversity comes they are unprepared, and suffer from poverty. Harvest time is followed by winter, so good times, high wages, are succeeded by hard times, scarcity of work, and consequently low wages. Therefore, save in time, and you will have something in the day of need; lay up something for the rainy day, and do not spend all you earn, living from hand to mouth. You need not live like Dives and feast sumptuously every day. Live within your means; do not contract debts for anything you can do without. Do not buy everything you see, or things that you do not need, merely because they are cheap. And you, married women, do not invest all the hard earned money of your husbands in drapery and millinery: be economical in the kitchen, for an extravagant housekeeper will carry out more with a spoon than an industrious man can bring in with

a shovel. If you observe these rules the trials that come of poverty and need will never be seen in your house.

But there may be poverty which married people have not brought on themselves- In that case let them comfort themselves with the thought that Christ had not where to lay his head, and that he called the poor, not the rich, blessed. Let them unite their temporal poverty with spiritual poverty; their poverty with the poverty of Christ, and make a virtue of necessity.

Part VI.

The sixth affliction is the early death of one party or of a child.

When two young people marry, they hope to have many years of conjugal happiness; but man proposes and God disposes. The husband or the wife falls sick and dies. This certainly is a hard blow for the surviving party, especially if they lived happily together, and if there be young children. I have often heard the bereaved husband say, with a sigh: "My God, what will become of these little children, who have now no mother?" Or the woman: "My God, who will now provide for my children?" And the widower or the widow feels so lonesome, so forsaken, for the half of his or her being is laid away in the grave. Or if a child die in the bloom of youth, there is great grief and sorrow, more especially if the parents are rich, and could have liberally provided for it.

How can this bitter water be changed into wine? I believe this miracle can be performed without much difficulty if the parents be good Catholics, strong in faith. We can not doubt that whatever God does is well done, and "we know that to them that love God all things work together unto God."—*Rom.* 8: 28. If one of them dies, or if one or more of their children die, God has so ordained it; therefore, it is something good and, however impenetrable the veil of Divine Providence, it will turn out for the best. They must consider this and be resigned to the will of God, saying with Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."—*Job.* 1: 21. Parents should comfort themselves, particularly at the death of a child with the thought: God gave us this child that we might prepare it for heaven; the end is attained, he has taken the child to himself; blessed and praised be his holy name!

Peroration.

These are some of the trials which, like the water-pots at the marriage of Cana, are not unfrequently found in the married state. The bitter water which they contain can be changed into

wine; married people need only observe the lessons and precepts which I have given them to-day. If, like the married couple of Cana, they invite Christ to their marriage, prepare themselves worthily for matrimony, live in it piously, and fulfil their duties conscientiously, God will be with them and bless them. And even if he should visit them with tribulations, he will not abandon them; he will only try them in order to purify, sanctify, and fit them for heaven. Christian married people, serve God in times of prosperity and adversity with equal fidelity, and be resigned to his holy will, and all things will work together unto good. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE NECESSITY OF A DIVINE VOCATION FOR THE MARRIED STATE.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.—John 2: 1.

In the gospel of this day we read of a marriage in Cana of Galilee, to which Jesus and Mary were invited, and where he wrought his first miracle. Marriages have been contracted since the beginning of the world, and will continue to be until the end of time. When God presented Eve to Adam, and the latter said: "This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (*Gen.* 2: 22, 23), the first marriage was celebrated; and Jesus Christ himself says that at the coming of the Son of man it shall be as in the days of Noe, when the people were marrying and giving in marriage till the flood came.—*Matt.* 24: 37-39. God himself instituted matrimony, and Christ raised it to the dignity of a sacrament. Matrimony is an honorable state, and those who embrace it do no wrong. But there is one thing which should not be lost sight of: a person that enters the marriage state must be called to it by God; for to enter a state for which one has no vocation is wrong and therefore sinful. This is particularly true of the married state, because it is of the greatest importance, not only for the married people themselves, but also for their children; nay, for the whole human family. I shall, therefore, speak to you

to-day of the necessity of a divine vocation for the married state, and show you that this vocation is necessary —

I. On account of the important duties of the married state;
II. On account of the great burdens connected with it.

Part I.

The duties of the married state are great:

1. On account of matrimony itself.

(*a.*) Matrimony, as faith teaches us, is a sacrament. As such it should be received only after the same careful preparation as is made for the reception of the other sacraments. He who receives communion in a state of mortal sin becomes guilty of sacrilege. The same applies to those who, in a state of sin, approach the altar to be married. The very moment they give their consent to the marriage by saying: "I will," they commit a sacrilege, because they receive the sacrament of marriage unworthily, and the blessing which the priest gives is changed into a curse. And how many do receive this sacrament in a state of sin! It is, alas, too true that many Christians enter the holy state of matrimony without having made a good confession and without a firm purpose of amendment.

(*b.*) Because matrimony is a sacrament, it should be received like every other sacrament, with *a pure and holy intention.* Supposing that a person were to go to confession for the purpose of mocking the priest, or to communion, in order to take the Sacred Host out of his mouth and use it for superstitious purposes; this would manifestly be a horrible sacrilege. The same must be said of people who enter the married state with an unholy purpose; they also abuse the sacrament. And are there none that do this? Is it not to be feared that some marry merely to gratify their lust? Is this a pure, a holy purpose? Has God instituted, and has Christ raised, matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament for this end? Does not the Angel Raphael say to Tobias: "They who in such a manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding,—over them the devil hath power."—*Tob.* 6: 17.

(*c.*) Even a civil contract requires that before we enter into it we consider the matter well, and consult experienced persons. If we were to enter into a contract of any importance in a careless manner and without premeditation, we should act impru-

dently and often sinfully. Matrimony is also a contract, and one of the most important. It is, moreover, sanctified by its sacramental character. It requires therefore greater preparation and premeditation than any civil contract. Those, then, who without due preparation enter into the married state, or do so inconsiderately and frivolously, as is often done, act against the will of God, and thereby commit a sin. Now, I ask, who can satisfy all these requirements? Only those who possess the grace of God, for without grace we can do nothing good, necessary and meritorious for eternal life. Who can expect this grace from God? Only those who are called by God to the married state. How necessary therefore is the divine vocation for this state!

2. *On account of conjugal love.* The Apostle says: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church."—*Eph.* 5: 25. Christ's love for his Church is the model that married people must imitate in their love for each other. But the love that Christ has for his Church is—

(*a.*) *A faithful love.* He has never forsaken his Church, and never will. Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Matt.* 28: 20. His love never grows cold; he offers himself up daily for her, and unceasingly imparts to her his grace. Thus married people must love each other as long as life lasts. Every infidelity of either party is an abomination in the eyes of God, a crime, which in the Old Law was punished with death. The love of married people must not grow cold in the course of time, nor turn into indifference, much less into aversion and hatred. Attractions, charms and beauty may pass away, but love must be enduring. Christian married people, who have been married twenty or thirty years, do you love each other to-day as affectionately and sincerely as you did on your wedding-day?

(*b.*) *An indulgent love.* What patience Christ had with his disciples. They had many faults. How mercifully, too, he dealt with sinners. In like manner married people must be indulgent with each other, and bear with patience their mutual faults and frailties. The admonition of the Apostle refers particularly to them: "Bear ye one another's burdens; and so you shall fulfil the law of the Lord."—*Gal.* 6: 2. Oh, how often do not married people sin in this respect? How easily they could avoid disunion and discord, quarrels and contentions, if they had more patience and indulgence one with the other.

(*c.*) *A holy love.* Christ thinks continually, as the Apostle says, "of sanctifying and purifying his Church and presenting her to

himself without spot or wrinkle." For this reason he causes his doctrine to be preached and the means of salvation constantly administered. Thus married people must endeavor by instruction, good example, and prayer, to assist each other in the path of virtue and holiness. Christian married people, how is it with your love? Is it holy? Do you call it a holy love when persons, instead of assisting each other to lead holier lives, lead each other to crime? There are, alas, many matrimonial unions in which we miss this indulgent and holy love. Whence is this? It is owing to the fact that it was flesh and blood, not God, that joined the two together, and God, as a punishment for excluding him from their marriage, withdrew his grace, thus leaving them destitute of the means of fulfilling the duties which the conjugal state enjoins upon them.

3. *On account of the education of their children.*

Parents are obliged to bring up their children —

(*a.*) *As useful members of society.* They must see that their children learn some trade or business, accustom themselves from childhood to economy and a regular life, act honestly, and conduct themselves properly; for only in such a way is there hope that they will eventually fulfil their duties as citizens and contribute to the common good. Parents who allow their children to grow up in ignorance sin grievously against society, for they are the cause of injuring and burdening it in various ways. They resemble people who circulate dangerous things, poison springs, or set fire to houses. Such parents are accountable to God for all the mischief which their badly brought-up children cause in the world. Parents should seriously consider this.

(*b.*) *As pious members of the Church.* For this purpose parents must implant religion and the fear of God in the hearts of their children from their earliest years; they must instruct them in Christian doctrine, and have them instructed by priests and teachers; they must guard them against seduction, sin, and vice; exhort them to prayer and the use of the means of salvation, and give them a good example. If parents do this they may live in the hope that their children will become good Catholics and be an honor and a joy to the Church; but if they neglect these duties they give the Church children who cause her only sorrow of heart, ignominy, and shame, and by their unbelief and wickedness, their scandals and bad examples, do the work of the devil. How will parents, forgetful of their duties, be able to account to God for this injustice which they do to the Church?

(*c.*) *As citizens of heaven.* God blesses parents with children in order that they may prepare them for heaven. For this purpose he gives them power over their children, whom he obliges to the strictest obedience; he puts into their hands all the means necessary to give them a good education. Nay, for this purpose Christ raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, and united with it special grace. Woe to parents who take no interest in bringing up their children for heaven! Woe to them, if they be satisfied with providing for them in this life, but care not whether they be saved or damned. They neglect the principal end for which matrimony was instituted, and cannot stand without trembling before the judgment-seat of God.

As the married state imposes such great and important duties, married people evidently need great graces; for with human strength alone these duties can not be fulfilled. And can all those who have entered the state of matrimony reasonably expect these special graces? Surely not if, contrary to the known will of God, and despite their vocation to another condition of life, they have rashly taken upon themselves the burdensome duties of the married state. Recognize therefore the necessity of a divine vocation for the holy state of matrimony.

PART I.

The burdens of matrimony are great:

1. *On account of the indissolubility of marriage.*

(*a.*) The married life of the Jews was not so burdensome as that of Christians. Moses permitted a man to dismiss his wife for grave reasons, especially on account of adultery, and to marry another. God permitted the dissolution of marriage to the Jews only on account of the hardness of their heart; still he did permit it. It was lawful, therefore, and one could make use of this privilege without sin. But the case is different with Christian marriage; it is a sacrament, and is absolutely indissoluble.—*Luke* 16: 18. *I. Cor.* 7: 10, 11. No power on earth can dissolve a lawful marriage after it has been consummated; death alone severs the bond. The Church can annul oaths and vows, can dispense from impediments of marriage; but she has no power over a validly contracted and consummated marriage, and she can not for any reason whatsoever dissolve the bond, for, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."—*Matt.* 19: 6.

(*b.*) The priesthood is also indissoluble. Once a priest, always a priest. He remains a priest even if he apostatize, and is accountable for all the duties which he assumed at his ordination.

The priest, however, is joined to God, to whom he already belongs as a Christian and as a man, and whom to serve is to reign. But matrimony joins a person to another person who would otherwise have no right to him or her; to a person who is defiled, perhaps, with many faults, sins and vices. The married state therefore offers greater burdens in this respect than the priesthood. Again the married state is more burdensome than the religious. One who enters a religious order has not always to live with the same persons; the superiors change; after the term of years for which they are elected has expired they resign their office, or are removed. In a religious order there is a time of probation, a novitiate, during or after which one can leave if one so choose. Even if one has already taken solemn vows one may leave the order under certain conditions and circumstances. Not so in the married state; there one is joined for life to another person; one must persevere with that person, however disagreeable the union may be. The married state can not be changed into another, not into the priestly, nor into the religious state, unless the other party give his or her consent: and even in this case the marriage bond is not dissolved, for the remaining party can not enter into a new matrimonial alliance. If young people would consider this, they would not enter into matrimony so thoughtlessly, since, whatever way it may turn out, it can not be dissolved. Nay, many would say with the Apostles after our Lord had made them acquainted with the indissolubility of marriage: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry."—*Matt.* 19: 10.

2. *On account of the dispositions of the married people.*

(*a.*) There are very few married people whose character, sentiments, and inclinations are perfectly congenial. The husband, perhaps, is irreligious, excitable, hard-hearted; the wife, pious, meek, sympathetic. Here is a wolf and a lamb, fire and water, heat and cold, closely, nay, indissolubly united. What a martyrdom and torment to be compelled to live with people who daily manifest dispositions which displease us, and on every occasion say and do what wounds the heart.

(*b.*) Add to this, that you cannot reveal your secret sorrow to any one in order to relieve your heart; for married people should keep to themselves what occurs between them. Besides, they have no right to complain of what displeases them and what they are obliged to suffer from their partner; for they have married each other of their own free will, nay, they would not listen perhaps to those who tried to dissuade them from this union.

What a torment for them must be the thought: "*I have made my own cross*—I have no one but myself to blame."

(*c.*) What is still worse is that there are very few married people who bear their cross patiently, very few who, in the spirit of penance, offer their secret sorrows to God and thus acquire merits for heaven. This is quite intelligible, if we reflect that they always blame another, their partner, for their woes. They never think of themselves as possibly contributing to their misery. As a consequence they are always discouraged, always fretful and impatient. They can not, even in their misfortune, console themselves with the hope that they will receive a reward hereafter for what they suffer here. Thus they are without comfort in the present, and without hope in the future.

How necessary grace is for married people, that they may be delivered from the evils attendant on their state of life, or, at least, be sustained, or strengthened by Almighty God, that they may bear those evils patiently. Evidently, it is only those who are called by God to enter the married state that have any right to expect the special graces necessary for that state of life.

2. *On account of children.*

(*a.*) Parents have much to endure for their children. How hard the father is compelled to work, early and late, from one year's end to the other, in order to feed, clothe, and provide for them. How much must not the mother suffer! How many sleepless nights and inconveniences, how much pain and labor, care and grief, does it not cost her to rear them!

(*b.*) The children grow up. They are docile, intelligent and pious, and justify the parents in entertaining the highest hopes for their future. The parents are laudably proud as their children advance in years, and strength, and grace. But how often are children of the highest promise stricken down by death! Or an accident is met with; one of the children loses an arm or a leg. A lingering illness ensues and the child remains crippled for life, or sickly and delicate. What a grief for the parents!

(*c.*) Or, as sometimes is the case, the children turn out godless; all admonitions, entreaties, threats, and punishments are fruitless; they advance in wickedness and malice as in years, and give occasion to fear that after a disgraceful life and dishonored death in this world their lot will be eternal ruin in the next. Oh, how unhappy must parents feel who have such children! Is it any wonder that they become prematurely old from grief and sorrow and sink into an early grave?

(*d.*) Often parents receive from their children only ingratitude and rudenness; stubbornness, obstinacy, and abuse are the reward they receive for the numberless benefits which they have bestowed upon their unnatural offspring. In their old age they frequently suffer need, and those to whom they have given life, actually wish for their death.

PERORATION.

From all that I have said you will perceive that the married state is a burdensome one on account of the indissolubility of the marriage bond, the dispositions of the married persons, and the troubles with children. If we add to this the important duties of the married state, every one will perceive that no one should enter into that state unless he is called to it by God. Only those who enter into matrimony because it is their vocation can hope to obtain the graces which are necessary for the fulfilment of their duties and the bearing of their burdeus. You can not be too careful and circumspect in this matter; you can not be too much on your guard against inconsiderate marriages. Your motive for entering into the maried state must not be lust, nor love of riches or honor, nor beauty, but the will of God and those holy purposes for which matrimony is instituted, for only in such a way can you hope to be happy. If there be some among you who have entered into matrimony without a vocation, and on that account feel unhappy, I would say to you with St. Augustine: "If you have not been called, make yourself called." Do penance for the past and thoroughly amend your life. Then God will be with you, and grant you all necessary grace, so that even in that state of life to which you were never called, and into which you thrust yourself against his will, you may yet work out your salvation and secure your eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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7. MORAL SKETCH.

WHAT THOSE MUST OBSERVE WHO INTEND TO ENTER THE MARRIED STATE.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.—John 2: 1.

I do not doubt that the betrothed, who according to the account in to-day's gospel held a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, were happy in their married state. I judge so from their having invited Jesus to their wedding. If they had been people without religion and the fear of God, they would not have invited him to be their guest, or if they had invited him, he would not have gone. This couple certainly had the blessing of God, because they were pious and virtuous. And from the fact that Christ changed water into wine for their sakes we can not doubt that he afterwards took them under his special protection and showered upon them temporal prosperity and happiness. In our day almost all young people rush into the matrimonial state, for they hope to find it, if not an entire, at least a partial, paradise. But experience teaches that they are frequently disappointed in their expectations; discontent, want and misery follow. Whence comes this? Because they do not invite Christ to their wedding, or in other words, they do not enter into matrimony as they should. I shall to-day speak of what those must observe who intend to enter into the married state.

I. They must be circumspect in their choice;
II. They must, in their single life, and especially while engaged, live chastely;
III. They must have a good intention;
IV. They must, before receiving the sacrament of matrimony, make a good confession and receive communion worthily.

PART I.

The married state is a most important one; because not only the temporal and eternal welfare of the married couple themselves, but also that of their children, and perhaps of many other people, depend upon the proper use and appreciation of the duties and opportunities pertaining to that state of life. The

circumstances and surroundings of a married person are particularly important, as they affect the daily life, and determine, in this direction or that, the bent of the inclinations. Consequently, before marriage the probable circumstances in which after marriage one would most likely be placed should be well and carefully considered. If circumspection he necessary at any time it is necessary here. You should try to ascertain:—

1. *Whether you are called of God to the married state or not.* We should never act contrary to the known will of God, but, least of all, should we do so in that most important of affairs, the choice of a state of life. To those whom God calls to any state of life he gives the natural aptitude for the duties of that state, as well as the supernatural graces therein needed. To rush into any state uncalled of God, is to undertake the performance of duties for which we may have no natural fitness and therefore we have no right to expect the necessary divine assistance. In doing so, we obviously expose ourselves to the danger of becoming unhappy for time and eternity. Now, to know whether you have a vocation for the married state, you must especially consider whether you have the qualities necessary for it; whether you have good health, sufficient means, a quiet and peaceable disposition. If any one be destitute of these qualities, it would be a sign that God has not called him to the married state, for when God calls us to a certain state, he also gives us the graces necessary for it. Again, you must see if you have an inclination for the married state or not. Those who have a constant aversion to it must not let themselves be persuaded or forced into it, for God has not called them thereto.

2. *You must see that you make a proper choice.* The principal thing is that the person you select should be religious, and lead a good life. Young woman, if he whom you are to marry is without religion and the fear of God, an idler, a drunkard, a gambler, a brawler, or a quarrelsome person, do not marry him; though he should please your eye and possess a large fortune, you can not live happily with such a man. And, young man, if the girl you wish to marry is vain, fond of dress, desirous to please, without the fear of God, frivolous or luxurious, lazy or quarrelsome, passionate or wasteful, dull or stupid, do not marry her. Do not look to money alone; this will not render you happy; nor to outward beauty, for beauty resembles a rose, which soon loses its petals and retains nothing but its stem and thorns. Since young people are very liable to make mistakes in the choice of the proper person, they must not trust too much to their own judgment; must guard against self-will, and ask the *advice of their parents and other pious and experienced persons, begging light from*

God. Examples: Samson, who married unhappily because he was self-willed.—*Judges* 14: 3. Tobias, whose marriage turned out well, because he took the angel's advice and prayed for light.

PART II.

Those who wish to enter into matrimony *must live chastely in the single state and especially during the time they are engaged.* It is the duty of all single persons, but especially of those engaged to be married, to live chastely. The promise of matrimony which they have made to each other, does not give them the least right to be less particular in regard to purity; all voluntary unchaste thoughts and desires, all impure looks and kisses, are as strictly forbidden to them as to other single persons.

Not a few engaged persons sin in this wise. A fatal result often of such sins is that the parties make slight preparation for confession, approach the sacred tribunal without contrition, and on the threshold of marriage make, what they had never made before, a bad and sacrilegious confession. In the state of mortal sin they kneel to receive the holy sacrament of matrimony, and thereby heap sacrilege on sacrilege. No blessing from on high descends upon that marriage. Do you believe that such a marriage can turn out well? No; such married people cut tho rods for each other's backs. The stripes will come only too soon. Discontent, contentions, quarrels, adversity, godless children, poverty and misery, are the consequences in this life, and unless they do penance eternal perdition in the world to come.

In your single state, then, guard with the most scrupulous care against transgressions of the sixth commandment. In company with persons of the opposite sex be very modest and discreet. And those who are engaged should preserve their purity only the more conscientiously.

PART III.

They must have a good intention in entering the married state.

1. Matrimony is instituted for three reasons:

(*a.*) That by the matrimonial union children may be lawfully procreated and brought up as Christians, by the united help of the married couple, that the human race upon earth may be propagated and the number of the elect in heaven increased.

(*b.*) That the married couple may assist and comfort each other in bearing life's difficulties, especially in declining years, and aid one another in their domestic affairs.

(*c.*) As matrimony is a remedy against concupiscence, Christians have in it the means of removing all unlawful desires and allaying the concupiscence of the flesh. Those who marry for these three motives, or even for any one of them, have the right intention and do not sin.

2. There are other reasons besides these three principal ones, such as temporal support, payment of debts, corporal and spiritual qualities of the person whom one marries. These secondary reasons must, however, not exclude the three primary motives, or at least the first one of them. He who would only marry for the sake of being supported, or maintained, would act against the will of God, because matrimony is not instituted for this purpose. It would be still more culpable for people to enter into matrimony merely for the gratification of their lust. Although matrimony was instituted as a means against the weakness of the flesh, yet those who enter it for the purpose of pandering to their lust, err greatly and sin still more grievously. To such the words of Raphael the Archangel apply: "They who in such a manner receive matrimony as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have no understanding,—over them the devil hath power."—*Tob.* 6: 27. Oh, that all those who marry would enter into that holy state piously, as did Tobias and Sara! —*Tob.* 3: 16-18.

Part IV.

Lastly, *before receiving the sacrament of matrimony the parties should make a good confession and communion.*

1. Matrimony is a sacrament of the living, and should be received in a state of grace. He who receives this sacrament in a state of sin, is guilty of a sacrilege and need only expect the curse of heaven. Those who wish to enter into the married state must make a good confession, in order to prepare themselves for the worthy reception of the sacrament of matrimony. A general confession may be necessary for many. It should be made by all who have any reasonable doubts as to the validity of former confessions. And even if such confession be not rigidly necessary, the occasion is most appropriate to make one. The parties are about to close, and close forever, one great epoch in their lives, and to commence another. Besides, such a general confession serves to make them humble themselves before God, and insures contrition in the tribunal of penance. How unhappy would people be if before entering into matrimony they were to confess invalidly. They would commit a threefold sacrilege—the

sacrilege of an unworthy confession, of an unworthy communion, and of the unworthy reception of the sacrament of matrimony. Can you imagine anything more horrible? What could be expected of such a marriage?

2. The Church also prescribes holy communion, because Christ, who vouchsafed to appear at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, must also come to them, to sanctify them and to bless their union. Happy those who prepare in their hearts a worthy habitation for Christ, their heavenly guest. They may hope that he will remain with them as long as their nuptial union lasts, and impart to them his love and grace in abundance.

PERORATION.

In conclusion, I would request all those who are engaged to reflect well on the words which the pious youth Tobias said to Sara, his bride: "Sara, arise, and let us pray to God to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day; because for these three nights we are joined to God, and when the third night is over, we shall be in our own wedlock; for we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God."—*Tob.* 8: 4, 5. Marry not like heathens that know not God, but like Christians, as children of God, members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost. Do not betroth yourselves lightly; ask the advice of your parents, and other experienced persons; pray to God fervently that you may know whether you are called to the married state or not, and can become happy with the person you intend to marry. Live chastely whilst you are engaged, and avoid every sin against purity. Enter into the married state with a pure, pious intention, and prepare yourselves for the worthy reception of this sacrament by making a good confession and receiving holy communion worthily. If you do this you may hope that God will bless your union. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Epistle. *Rom.* 12, 16-21. Brethren; Be not wise in your own conceits: To no man rendering evil for evil: providing good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as in you, having peace with all men, not revenging yourselves, my dearly beloved; but give place unto wrath, for it is written: "Revenge is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink; for doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THREE LESSONS ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

The lesson which I have read to you is a continuation of the epistle of last Sunday, with which it stands in close connection. The Apostle spoke of the love of our neighbor, and showed what qualities it should have, and how it should manifest itself. He who truly loves his fellow-men is kindly disposed towards them and looks upon them as his brothers in Christ, because faith teaches him that they, as well as himself, are redeemed by Jesus Christ and called to salvation. He takes an interest in their prosperity, and sympathizes in their adversity, willingly assists the needy, is kind and obliging to every one.

The lesson for to-day, then, treats of fraternal charity and admonishes us—

I. To live in peace with all men;
II. Not to take revenge on our enemies, but
III. To do good to them.

PART I.

We must endeavor to live in peace with all men.

1. *Be not wise in your own conceits.* It betrays pride when one fancies one's self to be wiser and to understand everything better than others. Such a man always thinks that he himself knows exactly what to do or not to do, and to be in no need of good advice from anybody; he aims to be the leader in everything, and wishes all to accomodate themselves to him. He who contradicts him may expect contumely and abuse. He does not yield, and is never convinced of anything contrary to his opinion; even when obviously in the wrong, he nevertheless sticks to his assertion. How much discomfort and discord does not such a man cause! How often does he not give occasion to contentions and quarrels! How often he disturbs the peace! The Apostle knew this, hence his admonition: *Be not wise in your own conceits.* Let us avoid this pride and be humble, for only the humble man yields, receives counsel, and keeps at peace with his neighbors.

2. *To no man rendering evil for evil.* To render evil for evil is a great breach of fraternal charity, and directly opposed to the example of Christ, "who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered threatened not, but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly."—*I. Peter* 2: 23. But what we must particularly consider is, that peace could never be maintained if it were lawful to render evil for evil. If any one offend us in word or deed, for instance, revile or strike us, and we in return revile and strike, what will be the result? Probably a never-ending series of wrongs and counter-wrongs, with detraction and vilification on both sides. Like a glass vase, peace is easily broken, but not easily restored again. Hatred and enmity are engendered, and once a person has given way to these passions there is no telling to what lengths they may lead him. If, on the contrary, we bear with patience the wrong that is done us and refrain from retaliation, we do at least what is required on our part for the preservation or restoration of peace. Oh, how many dissensions could be avoided if these rules were better observed. Why do disturbances of the peace originate in families, among neighbors, and in society, which not unfrequently end in terrible feuds, abiding enmities, and even homicides? Because people generally render evil for evil—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. A man is reviled—he reviles in return; he is injured—he injures in return; he receives a blow—he strikes back. In such a way mutual exasperation is kept up; a spark grows into a conflagration and does an immense deal of harm. Render to

no man evil for evil; if you have been offended, show that you are Christians, who, according to the example of Christ, know how to suffer, to keep silence, and to forgive. Thus you will preserve peace.

3. *Providing good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men.* In other words, live in such a manner that you not only please God, but also that you scandalize no man, not even your enemies. This again is an important rule for preserving peace. We read in the Acts of the Apostles (4: 32) that the first Christians were of one heart and of one soul, and that the most serene peace prevailed among them. Whence this concord and peace? Because they provided good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of man, and endeavored to lead a truly holy life. They practiced zealously the Christian virtues, aided the needy, comforted the afflicted, strengthened the weak and assisted one another in every necessity by word and deed; they formed one family, in which the spirit of discord had no resting-place. If in our days we so often see disunion and dissensions in families and communities, the reason is because the Christian spirit and behavior have disappeared from among them. How is it in those families whose members give full scope to their passions and indulge in every kind of sin and vice? Is there any peace and concord there? No; on the contrary, nothing but dissension and contention. On the other hand, we notice peace in pious, virtuous families from one year's end to the other. Provide, therefore, good things before God and man, and you will preserve peace.

4. *If it be possible, as much as is in you, having peace with all men.* The Apostle by these words wishes to prevent a misunderstanding which his admonitions to peace might occasion. It is impossible, he says, to live with all men in peace, but if you endeavor, as much as is in you, to have peace, and it is nevertheless disturbed, it is not your fault, and you are not responsible for it to God. There are cases in which, with the best will, it is impossible to keep the peace. Sometimes the duties of our state of life oblige us to resist vice, to abolish scandals, to correct and punish sinners. If those in authority were to allow every kind of evil in their inferiors, parents in their children, masters and mistresses in their servants, without correcting them, they would by keeping silence make themselves guilty of the sins of others. When there is no alternative but to sacrifice peace with man, or peace with God and our conscience, between the friendship of the world, and the friendship of God, it is our duty not to regard the world, but to remain faithful to God, and not to suffer ourselves to be annoyed at the disagreeable things or persecutions

which in the faithful performance of our duties, we may encounter—for this reason the Apostle says: *If it be possible, as much as is in you, having peace with all men.*

PART II.

1. *We must not take revenge on our enemies.*

(*a.*) *Not revenging yourselves.* In these words the Apostle forbids personal revenge. Why? Because the greatest evils would result therefrom. Who is just enough to measure his revenge according to the measure of the injury sustained? Who is prudent enough in every case to decide whether the offence was committed through malice, or a misunderstanding, or in haste, or inadverdently, or perhaps even from a good intention? Would not our revenge be the occasion for a new wrong? And what a terrible place would this earth become, if every man were allowed to be the avenger of his own real or fancied grievances! It would be impossible for human society to exist.

(*b.*) Because personal revenge is diametrically opposed to the spirit of Christianity. Being Christians, we are obliged to love all men without exception, to forgive those who offend us and return good for evil. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." —*Matt.* 5: 44. The revengeful man does the very contrary; instead of loving his enemies, he hates them; instead of forgiving them, he meditates revenge; instead of doing good to them, he feels happy when he can do them an injury.

(*c.*) Because personal revenge is in direct opposition to the example of Christ; he has the most inveterate enemies; they slander, revile, calumniate, persecute and crucify him. He is omnipotent, he can take revenge on them and destroy them. But does he? No; he bears with them, he prays for them, he offers himself on the cross for them. What resemblance should we bear to him, if we permitted ourselves to be controlled by a desire of revenge? Christ detests revenge so much that he severely rebuked his disciples, who with inconsiderate zeal would call fire from heaven upon a city of the Samaritans: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save."—*Luke* 9: 55, 56.

2. *But give place unto wrath, for it is written; Revenge is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

St. Paul, in these words, gives an additional reason why we must not revenge ourselves, declaring that revenge and punishment are privileges reserved by the wise dispensation of God for himself alone, and that those who revenge themselves infringe upon the rights of God, by arrogating to themselves one of his prerogatives. If after suffering an injury, revengeful thoughts arise in our mind, we must suppress them and say to ourselves: It is not my province to take revenge; this right belongs to God alone. We must not, however, deliver, as it were, those who offend us to the vengeance of God and wish God to punish them, for this would show a revengeful disposition and would be equivalent to saying: "I will not take revenge on them, but God shall do so." Christian love obliges us to pray to God, that he may deal with our enemies according to his mercy, and give them time for repentance, that he may not be obliged to punish them. Thus did Christ, St. Stephen, and all the saints, who called not the vengeance of God upon their enemies, but asked grace and forgiveness for them. We can not, indeed, dictate to God, as regards his allowing his enemies and ours to go unpunished, but we may and should pray to him for this grace for them. That such a petition is pleasing to him, we see from the prayer which St. Stephen made for his murderers, for to this prayer Saul owed his conversion and his call to the apostleship. A particular incentive to stifle all revengeful thoughts should be our own weakness and frailty. Oh, where should we be if God, when we sinned, had given way to revenge, and not delayed his punishment, and had not had patience and indulgence with us? Let us acknowledge with the prophet, that it is owing to the "mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed."—*Lam.* 3: 22. Now if God is so merciful and forbearing with us, should we not have patience with our enemies and forgive them, that we may show ourselves worthy of the mercy of God?

Part III.

We must do good to our enemies.

1. The Apostle goes still further; we must not only take no revenge on our enemies, but we must do good to them, for he says: *If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink.* God deals in this way with us; he "maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."—*Matt.* 5: 45. Our Saviour treats us in the same manner. We offend him numberless times by our sins, but so far from avenging himself, he gives us new graces and benefits. He offers himself daily in the mass for us; he announces his saving doctrine to us by his ministers, and invites us to the reception of the

sacraments to purify and sanctify us. Should not this love and goodness of God be a powerful incentive for us to do good to our enemies and those who offend us?

2. *For, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.* Fire burns. No one can have coals of fire put on his head without suffering great pain. Such coals of fire are to our enemies the acts of kindness we do them. If we behave kindly to them and even do good to them, they will feel sorry for the wrong they have done us; they will change their tactics and become friendly. We shall captivate the hearts of our enemies by kindness and make them our friends. St. Augustine says: "There is no better challenge to love than the manifestation of love." Moreover, by showing kindness and benevolence to our enemies, we not unfrequently make them also the friends of God. They lay aside their enmity towards us; and by doing this remove, perhaps, the principal cause of their enmity with God; the peace which returns into their hearts ennobles their disposition of mind, and causes them to abandon their sinful life, become better Christians, and thus obtain the grace and friendship of God. We find a number of examples in the Lives of the Saints, where the greatest sinners, by the acts of kindness which the persecuted and offended Christians showed them, were converted and ever after led a pious and penitential life. This should be an encouragement for us to forgive our enemies with all our heart and to return them good for evil.

PERORATION.

Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good. Let us be strong-minded, as it becomes Christians to be; let us suppress all hostile, revengeful thoughts, which may arise in our mind when we suffer injuries; let us treat our enemies with charity, and instead of evil, let us do good to them. This is the greatest and most glorious victory that we can gain over ourselves, a victory which is rewarded with the sweetest consolation in this life, and hereafter with the everlasting joys of heaven. Amen

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTFR EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* 8: 1-13. At that time: When Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him; and be-

hold a leper came and adored him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, stretching forth his hand, touched him, saying: I will; be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith to him: See thou tell no man; but go, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him: I will come and heal him. And the centurion, making answer, said: Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And Jesus hearing this, marvelled, and said to them that followed him: Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion: Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. And the servant was healed at the same hour.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE CLEANSING OF A LEPER AND THE HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.

We read in the gospel of this day that Jesus came down from a mountain and that great multitudes followed him. What mountain was it from which Christ descended? It was that mountain on which he had preached a long discourse before a great multitude—the marvellous Sermon on the Mount. This mountain, located in the vicinity of Genesareth, is pointed out to-day to the traveller from distant lands as the "Mountain of the eight Beatitudes," because the eight Beatitudes were the beginning and the principal contents of that remarkable sermon on the Mount. The people heard in this sermon doctrines that were entirely new to them, and were so impressed by them that they would not go their way, but followed Christ, as he came down from the mount. In order to confirm these people in their faith, Christ gave them a proof of his divine power by working two miracles,

of which the gospel of this day speaks. We shall make them the subject of our present meditation. They were:

I. The cleansing of a leper, and
II. The healing of the centurion's servant, sick of the palsy.

PART I.

1. *And behold, a leper came and adored him, saying: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

(*a.*) *Leprosy*, which is so often mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, was a loathsome disease of the skin, characterized by whitish scales, and the virulence thereof was so great that no disease of modern times can be compared with it. In some respects like cancer, it ate away flesh and bone, and was generally incurable. At the close of the eighth, and last crusade, about the middle of the thirteenth century, a malignant disease, known as the plague, or pestilence, somewhat similar to leprosy, broke out in the Christian camp in the East and raged with such violence, that nearly half of the army was carried off in a few days. The leader, the soul and spirit of the enterprise, fell a victim to this horrible malady—a man who combined in himself in an eminent degree "the qualities of a great king, a great hero, and a great saint"—Louis IX. The surviving warriors and pilgrims brought this disease into Europe; the authorities of towns and cities erected houses outside the city limits, called leper-houses, lazar-houses, lazarettos; and into these abodes the unfortunate men and women that were infected were obliged to retire and seclude themselves from all communication with the outside world, for fear of contagion. Some of these houses can be seen to this day, and they still bear the same name.

(*b.*) The man mentioned in the gospel of this day was full of leprosy, as St. Luke says (5: 12). His disease had spread to such an extent that a speedy death was inevitable. What an unhappy man! But more unfortunate still are those who are infected with the spiritual leprosy of sin, for they fall a prey to eternal death, unless they are healed. Alas! there are so many who are indifferent to this spiritual leprosy, and consequently do not wish to be freed from it. What blindness!

(*c.*) The leper *came to Jesus*. If he had not been leprous, he would not, perhaps, have come to Jesus; behold, how true is the saying that necessity leads men to God. Look therefore upon crosses and afflictions not as evils, but as graces, and employ them for your salvation.

(*d.*) The leper *adored Jesus.* Adore him also, as often as you come near him. But how do you behave in his presence in the church? You scarcely bend your knee, or if you do, as if you were mocking him. Oh, consider that he who is present under the species of bread, will one day be your judge.

(*e.*) The leper said: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Let us admire the faith of the leper. He does not doubt the omnipotence, and consequently the divinity of Christ, when he says: *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Let us also imitate his resignation to the will of God. He does not say: "Thou must make me clean," but leaves it to Christ to make him clean or not. We must do this in all things; we must pray with faith and confidence, "for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, that is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."—*James* 1: 7, 8. We must also pray with resignation to the will of God, especially when we pray for temporal things, which are not necessary for our salvation. God knows best what is good for us; we must therefore leave it to him when and how he will hear us. Thus Christ prayed in the garden of Olives.

2. *And Jesus stretching forth his hand, touched him saying: I will, be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed.*

(*a.*) By the words: *I will, be thou made clean,* Christ manifested his divine power. The apostles and the saints, did not speak thus when they performed miracles, healed the sick, raised the dead to life. They had recourse to God in prayer, full of faith that he would give them the power to work miracles, which they did not perform in their own name, but in the name of Jesus. St. Peter said to the man that had been born lame: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk."—*Acts* 3: 6. Since Christ by his own power worked miracles, and all the faithful who performed miracles did so only in his name, it is an incontrovertible proof of his divinity.

(*b.*) Jesus said: *I will, be thou made clean,* and he was made clean. *The will of Christ is action;* whatever he wills is done, and no power can hinder him. What a consoling truth for us Catholics. He will protect the Church against all her enemies, for he has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Let us have confidence in this time of persecution of the Church.

3. *And Jesus said to him: See thou tell no man; but go, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.*

(*a.*) Since Christ sought not his own honor, but the honor of his heavenly Father, he forbade the leper to manifest his miraculous cure. This should be a lesson to us to keep secret whatever good we may do or may have done, and never to reveal it through vanity or ambition. If we have done a good work, let us not boast of it. He who in his good works seeks not the glory of God, but his own, will receive no reward hereafter. Let us frequently say with St. Ignatius: "All for the greater glory of God." Perhaps Christ may also, from a motive of prudence, have commanded the leper to keep the miracle a secret. If the priests had heard of the miracle before they had examined the leper, they might not have declared him clean on account of their hatred and envy of Christ, but they might have asserted that he still had the leprosy. Herein also we should imitate Christ by keeping secret the good we or others do or have done, if from its revelation evil consequences are likely to follow.

(*b.*) According to the law of Moses, the cleansed lepers were obliged to show themselves to the priests, for these were appointed to examine them and declare if they were really healed. Only after the priests had pronounced them clean were they considered so and allowed to return to society. Here leprosy manifestly appears as a figure of sin of which we are freed only by the priest's absolution. If you were infected with leprosy, or with any other disease, and in order to be freed from it had only to show yourselves to the priests, would you delay doing so? Certainly not. And yet you carry your spiritual leprosy, sin, with you for months and years without going to a priest to be healed of the sickness of your soul by sacramental absolution. How blind you are! How little you understand the nature of sin, which is the greatest, nay, the only evil!

(*c.*) The lepers when healed were to offer a gift to God. Let us also show that we are thankful to God for recovered health by making a good use of it, and above all, for the cure of the soul, that is, for the forgiveness of our sins by a total and lasting amendment of life.

(*d.*) Jesus adds: *For a testimony unto them.* The priests, after having convinced themselves of the miraculous cure of the leper, should have believed that Christ was truly the promised Messias. Behold, how Jesus offers his grace to all men, even to his enemies, as were the Jewish priests. Oh, let us not resemble those Jewish priests, who made no use of the grace offered them, but persevered in unbelief and sin, and consequently perished.

Part II.

1. *And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion, beseeching him and saying: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented.*

(*a.*) *Capharnaum* was a city on Lake Genesareth, in which not only Jews but also pagans lived. Christ frequently came to this city, taught there, and performed miracles. By this he gave us to understand that not only the Jews, but also the pagans, should enter his Church and have part in the grace of redemption. He also pronounced woe on Capharnaum, because it persevered in unbelief and impenitence in spite of the many graces received. —*Luke* 10: 15. This woe will come upon all impenitents sinners.

(*b.*) The centurion of Capharnaum was a Gentile, but he did not worship idols; he knew and adored the true God, lived piously, was very favorably inclined towards the Jews, and built them a synagogue. He had been an eye and ear witness of the miracles of Christ; he therefore approached him with the profoundest respect and unbounded confidence, requesting him to heal his servant. In this centurion masters and mistresses have a beautiful example as to how they should behave toward their employees. He did not send his servant away when he was sick, and cause him inconvenience, but kept him in his house and provided for him whatever was needed in his sickness; he even went to Jesus to seek relief for him. A father could not treat his child better than did the centurion his sick servant. Do you treat your domestics with affection, especially in their sickness, and do you think of the salvation of their souls? Remember the words of St. Paul: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."—*I. Tim.* 5: 8.

2. *And Jesus said to him: I will come and heal him.* Why does Christ at once declare himself ready to go to the centurion's house and heal his sick servant? Without doubt on account of the active love of his neighbor, which the centurion had shown towards the Jews and his sick servant. Here we see how we can cause Jesus to be inclined to us, and how we can obtain his love and mercy; only let us be tender-hearted and merciful to our follow-men. With whatsoever measure we measure unto others, it shall be measured again unto us.

3. *The centurion, making answer, said; Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed.*

(*a.*) Which are we to admire more in the centurion, *his humility* or *his faith?* He is a superior, holding a high position in the social scale, and yet he considers himself not worthy to receive Christ into his house. Therein he excels Zacheus. If we think little of ourselves, we shall not feel grieved and offended when we experience a humiliation. The centurion believed Christ to be the Son of God, and therefore able to heal his sick servant by his word only. This was the reason of his great humility. How few humble themselves thus before Christ! They come to church full of pride, when frequently the uppermost thought in their mind is to please and show off. They act like the proud Pharisee in the temple. Of what profit is it to such persons to go to church? They only offend God and leave the church greater sinners than they were before they entered it.

(*b.*) The Church bids us use the words of the centurion at holy communion. Oh, that we would always repeat them with the same faith, humility, love and respect as the centurion did, in order to communicate worthily.

4. *For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this man, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it.*

In these words the centurion acknowledges Christ as the omnipotent Lord and *God.* As I have servants under me whom I can command with a word, so thou hast the power of nature at thy command; thou hast only to say the word, and my servant shall be healed. How rare is such faith among Christians! It is owing to this want of faith that prayers are so cold, so distracted, so void of devotion and confidence; it is for this reason that Christians are so easily discouraged in suffering and tribulation.

5. *And Jesus hearing this, marvelled and said to them that followed him: Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

(*a.*) When it is said here that Jesus wondered, you must not think that the centurion was not known to him, or that he was surprised at it, for Christ is omniscient; but he expresses his surprise in order to draw the attention of the people that were present to the great faith of the centurion. This faith was indeed admirable, for the centurion was a soldier and a pagan, in whom we should have expected no great faith. His faith surpassed

that of the Scribes and Pharisees who, although they were very learned in religious matters, and were familiar with the predictions of the prophets in regard to the Messias, did not believe in Christ. Such is the case to-day, the common, uneducated people have greater faith than many of the learned. Science is not necessary for faith, but only good will and humility.

(*b.*) Christ foretells that many shall come from the East and the West, that is, that Gentiles from all parts of the earth shall enter into his Church and be saved, while the children of the kingdom, that is, the Jews, shall persevere in their unbelief and perish. History verifies this prediction. The greater portion of the Jewish people remained incredulous and obstinate, and were, therefore rejected; the Gentiles embraced the religion of Christ and were saved. We Catholics are now the children of the kingdom, but if we do not wish to be rejected with the obstinate Jews, we must preserve our holy Catholic faith and live according to its precepts.

(*c.*) Lastly, our Lord said to the centurion: *Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. And the servant was healed at the same hour.* Here Christ reveals himself again as a God of love and mercy, always ready to assist where assistance is needed. This aid he will vouchsafe us in proportion as by humility, faith and confidence we render ourselves worthy of his assistance. Whatever anxiety or concern we may have, let us go with the centurion to Christ and beg his assistance with humble, confiding, trusting heart, and we shall most certainly find relief. Christ still invites all: "Come to me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11: 28.

PERORATION.

Take to heart the lessons of this day's gospel and make them the rule of your life. If you yourselves, or any of yours, fall sick, seek relief of Christ, as did the leper and the centurion. He is the best physician, and can help when human aid is vain. Make use of your sickness and all other temporal evils, according to the will of God, for your amendment, sanctification, and perfection. Be firm in faith, and humble of heart; practice prayer, love your neighbor, and be charitable and merciful to God's poor. Thus you will show that you are worthy disciples of Christ, and may hope to become heirs of his kingdom. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

I have not found so great faith in Israel,—Matt. 8: 10.

Both the leper and the centurion, mentioned in this day's gospel, made themselves conspicuous by their faith, for they both had recourse to Christ in their afflictions, firmly convinced that he was God and that they could obtain relief from him. They also manifested their faith exteriorly, and confessed it by word and action; the leper adored Christ, and the centurion declared himself unworthy to receive him into his house; both also expressed their belief in the omnipotence, and, consequently, in the divinity of Christ. Like them, we must not only bear our Catholic faith in our hearts, but also profess it publicly. The Apostle demands this, saying: "With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." *Rom.* 10: 10. I shall speak to-day about the confession of faith and answer the two following questions:

I. When must we confess our faith?
II. How must we confess our faith?

PART I.

We are not obliged to confess our faith always; but we must never, in any case, deny it. Christ says in general terms: "He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father, who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 10. 33. Hence St. Augustine says: "As it profits unto eternal life to confess Christ, so it is injurious unto eternal death to deny him." Now the question is, when must we confess our faith?

1. *When the honor of God requires it.* Now the honor of God requires us to confess our faith—

(*a.*) *When we are questioned about it by the public authorities.* We are bound in this case to confess our faith in plain, unequivocal terms, under pain of mortal sin, and even if the confession of it should cost us our life. Our divine Saviour has given us the

example. When the high-priest adjured him by the living God to say if he was Christ, the Son of God, he replied: "Thou hast said it."—*Matt.* 26: 63, 64. Although he knew that this confession would deliver him to death, yet he made it, because silence would have been equivalent to a denial of the truth and a dishonor to God. The Apostles imitated this example of their Master.—*Acts* 4: 19, 20; 33. The martyrs of every age did the same. They knew that if they confessed their faith a most cruel death would be the consequence; yet they never hesitated a moment, for they remembered the words of Christ.—*Matt.* 10: 33. This is also our duty; if we be questioned concerning our faith by the public authorities, we are bound to confess it, no matter whether it be for our benefit or otherwise.

(*b.*) There are still other cases in which the honor of God demands that we confess our faith. Such cases would be, for instance, if we could gain new adherents for God, because thereby his honor would be increased; again if we should have an opportunity of preventing words and actions which injure the honor of God. Thus we must disapprove of all irreligious discourses, scoffs and derision at the doctrines and ordinances of the Church, and declare openly that everything that the Catholic Church teaches is sacred to us. This is the duty especially of superiors and such as have influence in a community. It is not advisable, however, for any one to enter into a religious controversy in saloons and like places with liberals and free-thinkers; to such men you must declare emphatically that it is not the place for such discourses, and if they are anxious to know the truth they should read good Catholic books, or inquire of those, who are appointed to teach.

2. *If our own or our neighbor's salvation demands it.*

(*a.*) *Our own salvation* obliges us to confess the faith, if concealing it would expose us to the danger of doing something which religion forbids. For instance, a Protestant employer, not knowing that his servant is a Catholic, obliges her to attend a Protestant church. In such a case the servant must reveal her faith, for it is strictly forbidden to take part in Protestant services, because this would be equivalent to a denial of the faith. Should an hotel-keeper set meat before a guest on Friday, not knowing that he is a Catholic, the guest must say that he does not wish to eat meat, and if he be asked the reason, he must say that he is a Catholic, and that the eating of meat is forbidden him on Fridays. If in these and similar cases the confession of our faith be attended with inconvenience and ridicule, we must disregard these things, because for our soul's salvation we must make every sacrifice.

(*b.*) *The salvation of others* obliges us to confess the faith, if by omitting to do so our fellow-men would be scandalized or be in danger of wavering in their faith; or if we have occasion by this profession of our faith to strengthen the weak, to comfort the persecuted, or to instruct heretics. It was particularly this consideration that urged the aged and venerable Eleazar to be constant at his martyrdom: "For," said he, "it doth not become our age to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, at the age of fourscore and ten years, was gone over to the life of the heathens, and so they, through my dissimulation and for a little time of a corruptible life, should be deceived, and hereby I should bring a stain and a curse upon my old age," etc.—*II. Mach.* 6: 24-31.

It is the strict obligation of superiors, fathers, and mothers to conduct themselves always as good Catholics, for their inferiors, children, and servants conform to their example, and would be very much scandalized if they noticed in them any contempt of religion.

3. *If the good of religion or a precept of the Church requires it.*

(*a.*) In our intercourse with other persons we have not unfrequently an opportunity of defending our holy religion, and promoting its interests. Let us suppose, for example, that when we are in company with others something is said against religion and good morals. In this case we must not keep silence, especially if others would infer from our silence that we assent to the opinions expressed; we are bound, on the contrary, to show by an express declaration or by our countenance that we disapprove of and condemn them. There are many who from human fear and respect dare not raise their voice against irreligious discourses, and, in order to avoid giving offense, assent to them. Such persons sin against their holy religion, and merit God's displeasure, since they endeavor to possess the friendship of man rather than that of God. Take to heart the words of Christ: "He that shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed when he shall come in his majesty, and that of his Father, and of the holy angels."—*Luke* 9: 26.

(*b.*) Sometimes a *precept of the Church* also obliges us to confess our faith. The Church commands us to abstain from servile work on holidays and to hear mass. Now, if a Catholic does servile work on holidays and does not hear mass, it would be not only a violation of the precepts of the Church, but also a kind of denial of the faith, because if we were not intimately acquainted with him we should infer that he was not a Catholic. The same may be said of the precept of fasting. In hotels, where the

precept of fasting and abstinence is not observed, the Catholic, by observing the precept of the Church, confesses that he is a Catolic; and this confession is so much the more necessary now-a-days the more frequently the precept of fasting is transgressed.

Part II.

Confession of the faith can be made *by words*, *by signs*, and *by actions*. In this threefold manner we must confess our faith whenever it is necessary.

1. *By words*. Words are used as the signs of ideas, and are the most natural means of conveying our thoughts to one another; words therefore are also the most appropriate means of revealing the faith which is concealed in our heart. We must, however, guard against all ambiguity, and make use only of such expressions as shall preclude the possibility of our faith being misunderstood. In the primitive ages of Christianity, it was a full confession of the faith to say, "I am a Christian," because in those days there were no sects who called themselves Christians, but in our times, when numberless sects call themselves Christians, the expression, "I am a Christian," is too general and indefinite, because it would not be known whether one belonged to the Catholic Church, the Greek Church, or to one of the other numerous sects separated from the true Church. Therefore, in order to make a full and distinct confession of our faith we must say, "I am a Catholic," for only by the word "Catholic" can we be distinguished from all other religious denominations. In order to confess our faith we have certain formulas called the *Apostles'*, *the Athanasian*, the *Nicene*, *Creed*, and that of the *Council of Trent*. As the first three belong to the first centuries of the Church, and consequently do not refer to the heresies of later times, the Church makes use of the symbol composed at the Council of Trent, as the solemn profession of faith, because in this particular one mention is made of the articles of faith rejected by the heretics of modern times.

2. Besides words, there are *signs* by which we confess our faith. Such signs are, the sign of the cross, the rosary, holy water, scapulars, genuflections, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and the veneration of the saints. He who uses such signs is generally considered a Catholic, if he is an entire stranger to us, for the members of Protestant denominations do not make use of these signs. Although the use of these signs does not constitute the essence of religion, yet we must not on that account disregard, much less despise them. He who is a good Catholic feels the necessity of showing himself as such outwardly, and therefore

he piously uses the signs of his faith. There are, however, cases in which we are bound under pain of mortal sin to employ these signs of faith. Such cases would be if by the neglect or omission of them we should give great scandal to others and expose them to the danger of being led astray in their faith, or of falling away from it. If the servants of kings consider it an honor to carry the emblem of their office and dignity, why should we be ashamed of the signs which make us known as Catholics? Is it anything contemptible to be a Catholic? Truly, he who is ashamed to make the sign of the cross, to take holy water, to let his beads be seen, is not a good Catholic, and has reason to fear that Christ will be ashamed of him on the day of judgment.

3. We confess our faith by *actions*, when we devote ourselves to those exercises which give testimony of our zeal in the faith. Such actions are, going to Church on Sundays and holidays, hearing sermons, the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, the observance of the precepts of fasting, the adoration of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar, the veneration of the Blessed Virgin and the saints. These exercises are necessary in themselves, because without them no truly Christian, pious life is possible. The argument however, which here weighs heavily is, that Christians who neglect these religious exercises give scandal and are the cause of others growing cold in their faith. How does it happen that so many Catholics in towns and in the country declare that going to Church, hearing the Word of God, frequent confession and communion, and other pious exercises, are follies, and so they live more like heathens than Christians! All this comes of the scandals and bad examples of so many of their fellow-men. They see how they disregard and neglect the religious exercises prescribed and recommended by the Church; hence they also disregard them and lead an unchristian life. Therefore, those who do not confess their faith by actions occasion great mischief, and cause not only their own ruin, but that of others also.

PERORATION.

Guard carefully against the neglect of the duties of religion, that you may not be a stumbling-block to your fellow-men. You are Catholics; it is your duty to confess your faith, whenever the honor of God, your own salvation, the salvation of your neighbor, the good of religion, or a precept of the Church, requires it. This confession is to be made in a threefold manner, by words, by signs, and by actions. *By words*, declaring without fear that we are Catholics and believe what the holy Catholic Church proposes to our faith; *by signs*, using those signs by which a

Catholic is distinguished from unbelievers and heretics, and by never omitting them through human respect, or to the scandal of others; *by actions*, by faithfully performing what the Catholic Church prescribes and recommends. If in such a manner we confess our faith, the words of our Lord will be realized in us: "Whosoever shall confess me before man, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 10: 32. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE EXTERNAL WORSHIP OF GOD.

Behold, a leper came and adored him.—Matt. 8: 2.

The gospel of this day mentions that a leper adored Christ; he acknowledged him as his Lord and God, and being convinced of his divinity, showed him divine honor. And he did not confine this to his heart, he manifested in also exteriorly; for, as St. Luke tells, us he fell on his face before Jesus.—*Luke* 5: 12. This falling on his face revealed the sentiments of his heart; he saw in Christ not a mere man but God himself with all his divine attributes, and on this account he had the most profound veneration for him and humbled himself in the dust. Like this leper, we must adore God not only interiorly, but also exteriorly, for although interior worship is the main thing, yet exterior worship is necessary and belongs to the interior, as the body to the soul. Exterior worship consists in manifesting our interior, respectful sentiments towards God by exterior actions; such as genuflections, folding the hands, and especially by participating in public worship. Of this external worship I shall speak to-day, and explain to you why it is necessary.

PART I.

The history of all times and nations teaches us that we should worship God not only interiorly, but also exteriorly.

(*a.*) All nations of the earth, even the pagans, had from time immemorial a public external worship, and manifested their

religious sentiments by meetings, sacrifices, hymns, and prayers. Plutarch says: "If you travel the world over, you may find cities without walls, without science, without kings, or riches; but no one has ever seen a city that has not its temples and gods, and I believe that a city without a foundation can more easily be formed and exist than a community without a belief in a deity."

(*b.*) In the Sacred Scripture mention is made of external worship on almost every page. Abel, Henoch, and Noe erected altars to the Lord, and offered sacrifices; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did the same. The Israelites received from God himself various ordinances concerning worship, and those who were zealous in their faith clung to them so firmly that they would rather sacrifice their lives than forego the prescribed worship. Witness Daniel, who preferred to be cast into the lions' den, rather than omit the prayers and genuflections prescribed by the divine law.

(*c.*) Christ, it is true, says: "God is a spirit: and they that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth."—*John* 4: 24. In these words, however, he does not disapprove of external worship, but merely declares to the Jews, who honored God only with their lips, but whose hearts were far from him, that external worship has no value, unless it be the expression of the interior religious sentiments. Christ was far from disapproving of external religious usages; on the contrary, he observed them himself and ordained many for his Church. Thus he often went to Jerusalem and celebrated there the feast of the Pasch. He was baptized by John: he prayed with a loud voice in a kneeling posture, with his face to the earth. He taught us the "Our Father," and directed us to say it; he instituted a visible sacrifice and commanded the celebration of it for all time.

(*d.*) We read of the early Christians, that during the times of persecution they held their religious meetings in secluded places and in subterranean caverns (catacombs), and constantly risked their lives in order to be present at, and participate in, public prayer and the celebration of the holy sacrifice. This eagerness on their part is sufficient indication of what they thought of exterior worship.

PART II.

Our nature obliges us to eternal worship. We consist of *a body and a soul.* With both we should worship God; with the soul by interior, with the body by exterior adoration. The body, as well as the soul, receives from God numberless benefits; therefore, the body, in its way, as well as the soul, should thank, honor,

and worship him. The royal prophet calls upon all creatures in heaven and on earth, even the irrational and lifeless, to praise God; shall not our body, then, this masterpiece of the visible creation, also praise and glorify its Maker? Moreover, our body is sanctified, and is destined to rise glorious from the grave; to be again united with the soul, and with the soul to enjoy everlasting glory in heaven. Who, then, can doubt that the body also, in order to merit future beatitude, must adore and glorify God?

Part III.

External worship is also *deeply rooted in our nature.* If we feel joyful or sad, we manifest it by looks and gestures, by words and actions. If we kept our feelings locked up in our hearts we should act against the law of human nature. Nay, if these interior feelings become very strong, it is impossible to restrain them; they resemble water, which, when it has reached the boiling point, remains no longer quiet in the vessel, but being violently agitated overflows on all sides. The same may be said of religious feelings; wherever they are they manifest themselves, and the more they take possession of the heart and captivate it, the more they come to the surface. If we see a man who talks, laughs, and gazes around during mass, we naturally think such a person has no devotion in his heart. And why do we think so? Because we are convinced that the exterior is an index of the interior, and that men who externally give no sign of devotion, have no devotion in their heart either. But if, on the contrary, we see a person in the church on his knees, with his hands joined and his eyes fixed upon the altar, we judge that he has devotion in his heart. And why? Again for the same reason, that the exterior reveals and reflects the interior. Thus from the exterior we have an indication of what the interior is, and although devotion and piety are sometimes feigned, it is nevertheless true that those who are truly penetrated by a spirit of religion manifest it exteriorly on every occasion.

Part IV.

Exterior worship *assists and increases interior worship.*

(*a.*) General experience teaches that objects which fall under the senses make a deeper impression on us than they would if represented to our fancy only by thought or reasoning. We receive a livelier impression of a magnificent church which we see with our own eyes, than when we read a description of it. A sermon delivered by a priest with earnestness strikes us more

forcibly than when we read the same sermon in a book. The same occurs when exterior worship is united with the interior. Exterior devotion resembles fuel, which makes the fire burn all the brighter in proportion to the quantity we put on. Hence St. Augustine says: "While the exterior motions or gestures can not exist without the corresponding interior emotions, the latter, which have given the impulse, are again increased on their part by the former, and thus the emotion of the heart, which necessarily precedes, as it produces the exterior gestures, gains an increase by the gestures produced."

(*b.*) Moreover, external devotion at public worship is calculated to make a salutary impression on others and to edify them. How often does it occur that even those whose hearts are cold and almost dead to everything religious and divine, are attracted by the sight of a devout congregation and become themselves disposed to devotion! Yes, history is replete with examples of unbelievers and heretics who have been converted to the true faith by the devotion which pious Catholics manifested in their public worship.

PART V.

Exterior worship is also necessary *for the sake of good example* If we neglect exterior worship altogether, never participate in it, never make the sign of the cross, or say a vocal prayer, we should be looked upon as free-thinkers and infidels. Such bad example would have the most serious consequences for many, especially for inferiors and children. Why are many young people so careless about going to church? Because they see that their parents seldom go; or if their parents do go to mass on Sunday, the children see that going or staying away is a matter of slight moment in their eyes. Why do so many defer their confession and communion until Easter? Because they see others go to confession and communion only once a year. Those, therefore, who neglect and disregard external worship, manifestly give scandal; while those who fulfil their religious duties conscientiously give others good example, and without uttering a word are constantly encouraging and exhorting them to do likewise.

PERORATION.

I have given only a few of the reasons which go to prove the necessity of external worship. But they are quite sufficient to convince you that every one who intends truly to worship God, must worship him not only interiorly, but also exteriorly. He who

says that he worships God in his heart, but never manifests this worship outwardly is a liar; for a good tree brings forth good fruit. If the interior devotion of the heart be a constant fire, the exterior manifestation of it is a pure flame; and as flame or smoke is inseparable from fire, so exterior devotion is inseparable from interior. Attend church frequently, participate with fervor in the public worship of God, and be present on Sundays and holidays at mass in the morning, and vespers in the evening. Conduct yourselves everywhere as devout Catholics whose hearts are penetrated witk the spirit of religion, and whose piety serves to edify all men. If we worship God interiorly and exteriorly, and offer him the sacrifice of our body and soul, he will be pleased with us, will bless us, and reward us hereafter with the goods of eternal life. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

LEPROSY, A FIGURE OF SIN.

Behold, a leper came.—Matt. 8: 2.

Our divine Lord taught not only by words, but also by actions. Actions speak louder than words. All the miracles he performed may be interpreted in a spiritual sense, and will then be found to contain various lessons and truths. Christ by giving sight to the blind intimated that he was "the true light, which enligtheneth every man that cometh into this world."—*John* 1: 9. When he fed the hungry he referred to the wonderful bread from heaven, holy communion, in which be gives his own flesh and blood for the nourishment of our souls. When he raised the dead to life he gave us to understand that he had come to raise man from the death of sin to the life of grace. The two miracles mentioned in the gospel of this day have also a symbolical signification. We shall devote our attention to-day to the first of these miracles only, namely, the cure of the leper. *Leprosy is a figure of sin—*

I. In its origin;
II. In its nature;
III. In its cure.

PART I.

Leprosy is a figure of sin in its origin.

1. Leprosy has its origin in *bad humors*, accumulated in the body. Unless they are removed in time, they are apt to cause eruptions on the skin. In the East they produced leprosy. Now, in its origin leprosy may be most fittingly compared to sin. For as leprosy is a result of an accumulation of bad humors in the human body, humors which remain invisible to the eye, so sin also originates in the interior of man, namely, in *that proneness to evil* which is in every man, even the baptized in consequence of original sin. "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth."—*Gen.* 8: 21. This concupiscence in itself is no sin, but frequently leads to sin; for, as soon as we yield to it by entertaining with pleasure what it represents as agreeable and desirable, or really do that to which it incites, the sin is begotten." Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured: then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: but sin, when it is completed, begetteth death."—*James* 1: 14, 15. Examples: Cain saw that the Lord regarded Abel and his offering with favor, while his own gifts were rejected. This Cain saw with vexation, and being from his birth prone to evil, he was quickly roused to envy. As he did not resist his evil inclination at once and earnestly, but allowed the bad humors to work secretly in his soul, the disease became worse. Envy became hatred, and finally developed into murder, even the murder of his own most innocent brother. David in an unlucky moment cast an unchaste glance at Bethsabee, in consequence of which concupiscence awoke in him, causing impure desires, and as he did not earnestly resist he fell into the heinous crimes of murder and adultery. Thus from concupiscence originate all kinds of disorders and sins discernible in the lives of men.

What must we do to guard ourselves against sin? We must struggle manfully against our inborn inclination to evil and subdue it, according to the word of God: "The lust (of sin) shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it."—*Gen.* 4: 7. If, therefore, we be tempted to sin, for instance, to pride, impurity, avarice, envy, or anger, we must at once resist and refuse consent, and at the same time pray to God fervently for the grace of resistance. Only by so doing shall we be preserved from sin. Motive: "Blessed is the man that endùreth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life." *James* 1: 12.

2. *By contagion.* Leprosy is a *very contagious disease.* The touch of the leper, even the inhalation of the air poisoned by him, is dangerous and may communicate the disease. For this reason lepers were excluded from all society according to the law of Moses; they had to live outside cities and towns, wear loose clothes, and go bareheaded so that every one could know them at a distance; they were obliged also to cover their mouth, and to cry out to every one they met that they were unclean.—*Levit.* 13: 45, 46.

The leprosy of the soul, like the leprosy of the body, frequently originates from contagion. The first centuries after the creation of the world bear testimony to this sad truth. The children of God, that is, the descendants of Seth, lived in piety and godliness; but when they entered into relations with the children of men, the impious descendants of Cain, and intermarried with them, they were infected by them and became wicked like them. The degeneracy of morals became so great and widespread, that God found it necessary to destroy the whole human race by the deluge. Thus it has been at all times, and is at the present day: sin always reveals itself as a contagious leprosy. How many children and young persons are good and pious as long as they remain under the parental roof, but fall away as soon as they come into contact with the corrupt world. Even persons of mature age frequently lose their good principles and lead a wicked life by associating with irreligious and immoral persons. Whence comes the present corruption of morals that pervades every state of society? From scandal and bad example. He that wishes to preserve himself from the leprosy of sin must avoid all intimate society with the wicked. "My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them."—*Prov.* 1: 10. Parents, do all in your power to guard your children against bad company.

Part II.

In its nature.

1. Leprosy is a *very disgusting and loathsome disease.* It makes its appearance on the skin in spots of a reddish white, and has this peculiarity, that the hair which is in these spots turns gray; it goes on spreading more and more, and frequently extends over the entire surface of the body, from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet. It keeps eating deeper into the flesh, too, even to the very bone; in consequence of which the flesh frequently falls off in lumps, the whole body putrefies and disseminates an intolerable stench. There is indeed no disease so loathsome and horrible as leprosy.

But far more loathsome is the spiritual leprosy, sin. A pure soul adorned with sanctifying grace is an image of God, the highest and most perfect good: it possesses a grace, a charm, a beauty, and a dignity, to which nothing created can be compared. Now, what does sin do? It obliterates from the soul the image of God and imprints on it the image of the devil; it disfigures and dishonors the soul in such a manner that it becomes far more abominable and intolerable to God than the most awful stench of rottenness from the graves can be to the most delicate person. Spiritual writers say that if we could see with our bodily eyes a soul stained by mortal sin, the sight of it would fill us with such terror and horror that we should fall dead. O sinner, how does your soul look? You adorn your body in order to please men, but your soul is a rotten carcass, from which God and his angels turn their eyes with horror. And still you heed it not, but carry such a soul about with you for years.

2. Leprosy is a *very painful disease*—

(*a.*) *In itself.* This is easily understood, for it eats away the flesh to the very bones. How great, how lasting, must be the pain whilst this slow destruction of the body is in progress!

(*b.*) *On account of its consequences.* As already stated, lepers were forbidden all intercourse with men; they were left entirely to themselves; nobody would or could nurse them. What a deplorable situation! Is there anything more distressing than to be sick, and miserable, and to be abandoned by all?

In this also sin resembles leprosy. I do not speak here of the temporal evils which sin sometimes brings, such as poverty, loss of reputation, sickness, an early death,—but of the torments caused by an outraged conscience. Even the greatest sinner can not entirely suppress his conscience; it is a worm that never dies.—*Is.* 66: 24. It lies down with the sinner and rises with him, accompanies him on all his journeys, and stings most unmercifully, particularly in solitude. What bitter, painful hours it will cause him in death! Example: Antiochus on his death-bed.—*I. Mach.* 6: 10 *et seq.* The torments of conscience frequently become so unendurable to sinners that they lay violent hands on themselves, and give themselves over to perdition even in life.

(*c.*) Sin, like leprosy, separates its victim, not from man indeed immediately, but from God. So that God from the instant the sin is committed becomes the defiled soul's adversary; it separates him from the communion of the Church, whose means of

salvation are of no profit to the sinner; and lastly, from heaven, into which nothing defiled can enter. Oh, how wretched does not sin make man!

3. *Leprosy is generally incurable*, particularly when it has gone so far as to become chronic. Such lepers must feel wretched indeed when they are forced to say to themselves: If God does not work a miracle in my favor, death alone can deliver me.

Herein sin again resembles leprosy. If it be once rooted in the soul and become a habit, a radical and lasting conversion seldom takes place. Drunkards, gamblers, libertines, blasphemers, the avaricious, are what they have been, and very likely will remain what they are. Many a time a half-wish is formed that their lives had been better. So far as the past is concerned no doubt such a wish is sincere. They feel that no fruits remain to them of those things in which they gloried. That Past—its pleasures are done with, the day of reckoning is yet to come. But that wish of habitual sinners is sterile as regards the present and future. Though they may wish they had led a different life ten or twenty years ago, yet what they were ten or twenty years ago they are to-day, and expect to be to-morrow. Theirs is the leprosy of sin, incurable, short of a miracle. Many times the sinner does not even endeavor to rise from his misery and sin; he remains impassive and callous. Sometimes he makes an attempt, but it is only spasmodic, and he soon relapses; for as soon as his old darling passions, his inveterate habits, claim indulgence, all his attempts at amendment are wrecked and he falls back into his former condition. Thus he continues in the state of sin until he falls into the hands of the living God, and passes from temporal to eternal death. Tell me, is there anything more deplorable than a sinful life that has become habitual? And how many lead such an habitually sinful life!

Part III.

In its cure.

According to the law of Moses, lepers were to observe three things in their cure:

1. *They were to withdraw for seven days and separate themselves from all other men.* This time of total separation was appointed as a probation to see if the leprosy had really vanished. He who wishes to be cleansed from spiritual leprosy must also seclude himself—

(*a.*) *Interiorly from sin.* As long as man clings to sin, loves it, is pleased with it, a reconciliation with God is absolutely impossible. True repentance consists in turning the heart from sin to God; in other words, the sinner must be really sorry for his sins, and therefore hate and detest them, and be earnestly resolved not to commit them any more. Contrition and a firm purpose of amendment are essential requisites for the forgiveness of sin.

(*b.*) *Exteriorly from the evil occasion.* By sinful occasions we here understand circumstances which have already caused us to sin grievously and which would in all probability have the same effect, if we were again placed in them. This being the case, common sense tells us that the man who deliberately places himself in such circumstances, deliberately places himself there to sin, if he does not avoid them. Such occasions are sinful intimacy with persons of the opposite sex, evil companions, visits to houses and company where one is vehemently incited to evil, bad books and papers, and such as are hostile to the Church. He who can not resolve to avoid these proximate occasions of sin has certainly not an earnest wish to avoid sin itself: for he who wills not the means, certainly wills not the end. If the libertine will not absolutely renounce the society of his bad companions, if the drunkard, and the idler, and the gambler still hang around the places where they fell, and still consort with those who helped to ruin them, there is no change, and in a few days they drop into the old groove. If they have been to confession, it was a bad one. There was no contrition. There was no honest and firm purpose of amendment—there was no forgiveness. However hard it be on sinners to do so, they must give up their pet friends and places when these are the occasion of their sin. Let them ponder the words of the Master: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire."—*Matt.* 18: 8.

2. *They were obliged to show themselves to the priest.* The Jewish priests were authorized by law to examine the lepers and to declare whether they were clean or not. Before a leper was declared clean by the priests, he was not considered as such, and was not allowed to return to society. For this reason Christ commanded the leper whom he had healed to show himself to the priests.

Those also who are infected with spiritual leprosy must have recourse to the priests; for these have received from Christ the power to forgive and to retain sins. But to enable them to exercise this power, the sinner must *show* himself to them; that is, he must confess all the sins which he has committed in thought,

word, and deed. If he fulfil this obligation he receives absolution, and is cleansed of the leprosy of sin. What a grace for us to have priests, who not only can declare that we are freed from sin, but who also have the power really to free us from our sins. How fortunate would the Jewish lepers have considered themselves had they been only obliged to show themselves to their priests in order to be cleansed of their leprosy! And yet many Catholics do not go to the priests to be freed from sin, this far greater evil than leprosy; and many others who go to the priests do not *show* themselves as they should, but conceal in confession what should be made known. What blindness!

3. *After being healed they were required to offer a gift to God.* Leprosy was generally looked upon by the Jews as a punishment for the sins which either the leper himself or his parents had committed. The lepers when healed were therefore required to offer a gift in satisfaction for their sins, which was called the sacrifice of expiation: this was succeeded by a burnt-offering, to thank God for the cure, and to promise him obedience.

We should also make these two offerings to God after confession. As in his mercy he has forgiven us our sins and the eternal punishment due to them, we should make at least some satisfaction, and faithfully perform the penance enjoined on us by the priest; but as this penance is generally insignificant and in no proportion to our sins, we should impose upon ourselves voluntary works of penance, in order to expiate the temporal punishment due to sin. We should also offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. It is surely fitting that we should give thanks to God for the great grace of forgiveness. The best sacrifice of thanksgiving that we can offer to God is a thorough and lasting amendment of our lives.

PERORATION.

Thus you see that the leprosy of the body in its origin, nature, and cure is a figure of the spiritual leprosy of sin. There are none among us who are infected with corporal leprosy, but great is the number of those who are infected with spiritual leprosy. Oh, that they would go to Christ and beseech him to heal them! Oh, that they would be really sorry for their sins and resolve never to offend him, and then show themselves to the priests, confess their sins candidly and sincerely, and receive sacramental absolution! How happy they are whose souls are purified and sanctified; they are no longer slaves of Satan, but children of God, and if they persevere to the end will be heirs of heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

YOU SHOULD KNOW FOR WHAT YOU PRAY AND SHOULD EARNESTLY DESIRE IT.

Behold, a leper came and adored him.—Matt. 8: 2.

The gospel of this day makes mention of two men, both afflicted, the one a leper, the other a centurion who had a sick servant. Both came to Jesus beseeching him to remove the weight which pressed heavily upon them. The leper wished to be freed from his leprosy, and the centurion besought Christ to heal his servant. Their prayers were not in vain, for the leper was freed from his leprosy, and the centurion's servant from his palsy. How is it that the prayers of the leper and the centurion are heard at once, while so many complain that God is deaf to their prayers? The reason is obvious. The prayer of each of these men was a true prayer, whilst that of most of us is a false one: "Ask, and you shall receive."—*John* 16: 24. These words our Saviour frequently addressed to his hearers. Many, recalling these words, pray, and yet receive not. Shall we say that God does not do his part? Rather let us confess that we do not do ours and that this is the reason why the prayers of so many of us are not heard. Our prayers have not the requisite conditions. We do not pray as we should pray. Hence St. James says: "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss."—*James* 4: 3.

Two things are necessary in order to pray well:

I. You must know for what you pray;
II. You must earnestly desire what you pray for.

PART I.

You must know for what you pray.

(*a.*) This means, you must pray *with understanding*. Many pray without reflection, that is, they do not consider for what they pray. They demand petulantly of God what they themselves fancy to be good or what flatters their sensual inclinations. But how often do we not err in our wishes and inclinations, believing that to be good which is most pernicious and injurious. That only is good which is in accordance with the

will of God; anything else therefore should not be the object of our desires. We offend his Providence if we ask for things which are injurious to us, as we should offend his goodness if we asked him for what is worthless. God is ready at all times to grant what is really for our good. Hence it is a great blessing that God does not hear such prayers; though, on the other hand, it would be a well-deserved punishment if he granted what is asked in them. We must ask only for such things as are compatible with God's holiness, wisdom, and goodness, and whenever we pray for temporal things, let it be done under the condition that it is the will of God.

(*b.*) Another class of people who do not know what they pray for are those who pray *without attention.* They present their petitions, full of distractions, and without even endeavoring to be recollected. Such a prayer is a dishonor and an offense to God, of which the prophet Isaias complains: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."—*Is.* 29: 13; *Matt.* 15: 8. We may pray mentally without using words, but we can never pray with words alone without the understanding and the heart. Do those deserve to be heard who pray much and long, but for the want of attention do not know for what they pray? Scripture tells us not to speak inadvertently with God, for God is in heaven, and you are upon earth; that is, we should speak to God with the greatest humility and reverence, and our whole attention should be fixed on his presence, that we may know with whom we speak when we pray, what we say to him, and for what we pray.

Part II.

But it is not enough to know for what we pray; we must also *earnestly desire it.* It would be natural to suppose that the one would accompany the other. This is not the case, however, as we shall see by considering the matter more closely. For many do not by any means desire what they pray for, and for this reason God does not grant their petitions.

(*a.*) Among them may be mentioned those who no not pray according to the order which God has appointed. For Christ teaches us to pray first for spiritual goods, or those pertaining to God and our salvation, and after that for temporal benefits, when he says: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."—*Matt.* 6: 33. Worldly people desire first of all temporal things, and after that, they would not object if the kingdom of God were added. Hence when they pray, *Hallowed be thy name,* they say

it with their lips, but they desire something quite different, namely, their own honor and glorification. Such people would, if they could, change the seven petitions of the Lord's prayer. They would say first: *Give us this day our daily bread;* and lastly: *Thy kingdom come.* But truly pious Christians pray first for spiritual goods, with the firm conviction that God will give them at all times what is necessary for the support of life.

(*b.*) I may also mention those who do not make use of any means on their own part to attain their wish. They pray for instance, that the name of God may be hallowed, that his kingdom may come, that his will may be done, but they refuse to make any sacrifice, they will not bear the least burden for the honor of God, they will not stir a finger to bring about what they delude themselves into believing they pray for. Though lisping the words frequently enough, such persons care not a straw whether God's name is hallowed or not, whether his will is done, or whether his kingdom comes. They pray for their daily bread, but will not earn it by labor and industry. They pray: Forgive us our tresspasses, but will not forgive their enemies; they pray that they may be saved from falling into temptation, but will not themselves resist or even avoid temptations; they pray to be delivered from evil, but will not give up sin, the greatest and only evil, avoid its occasions, or try to overcome bad habits. Such people must not complain if God does not hear and grant their petitions; they do not want them granted, or at least do not care whether they are or not. Their prayers are lip prayers and justify the complaint: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."—*Matt.* 15: 8.

(*c.*) Finally, there is yet a third class who do not earnestly desire that for which they pray; namely, those who do just the reverse of what they ask for. This is easily seen in the petitions of the Lord's prayer. They pray: *Hallowed be thy name.* Can he earnestly desire this who is in the habit of cursing, swearing, and blaspheming? *Thy kingdom come.* Can he earnestly desire this who bars the kingdom of heaven against himseif daily by mortal sin? *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Can he earnestly desire this who in all his words and actions resists the ordinances of God? Does not such a one mock God? *Give us this day our daily bread.* Can he earnestly desire this who squanders his income, his substance, by drunkenness, gambling, and idleness; who injures his health by his sins and vices, and jeopardizes his reputation and good name by his criminal conduct? And do those parents really and earnestly desire of God the grace and blessing of a Christian education for their children, who allow them every kind of liberty, because, as they say,

young folk must have some pleasure? Can those pray with a sincere heart for the grace of conversion, preservation in innocence, the gift of perseverance, who voluntarily go into bad company, seek the occasions of sin, and do not remove the obstacles to the amendment of their lives?

PERORATION.

Take care lest the reproach that you know not what you ask, and wish not that for which you pray, may apply to you. Let us ask first for what pertains to the glory of God and our own salvation; let us endeavor to our utmost ability not to destroy the effects of our prayers by our sinful deeds, and we shall soon experience more than heretofore the realization of our petitions. The load which heavily presses upon us will be removed from our hearts; and with the leper and the centurion we shall have reason to praise and thank God for his infinite mercy. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

WHO AVOIDS JESUS? WHO FOLLOWS HIM?

When Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.—*Matt.* 8: 1.

These words of St. Matthew are not only true of the time when Christ walked visibly upon earth, but they will remain true to the end of the world. They must remain true while the Church lasts, and the Church must last to the end of time, for Christ is her stay: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Matt.* 28: 20. But you must not misunderstand me. By what I have said I mean that persons like those who once sought the society of Jesus, who heard and obeyed him, have heard and obeyed him at all times, and do hear and obey him even now; and persons, like those who then avoided his company, avoid it now, and will avoid it to the end of time.

PART I.

The gospel of this day says: *Great multitudes followed him.*

1. You may judge at once that the *so-called respectable people were not in the crowd;* Herod, Pilate, Caiphas, Annas, and the other great ones of those days were to be seen only where they found comfort and luxury. They would have considered it beneath their dignity to follow the mortified Jesus, the reputed son of the poor carpenter of Nazareth, without rank, title, or distinction. If our Lord had visited them in their palaces, and to gratify their curiosity had performed miracles, it would have been a pleasure to them; but to come to him of their own free will and to follow him on his painful journeys—who could expect this of them? That they should praise God in Christ, and cry with the multitudes, that the Lord hath visited his people (*Luke* 1: 68), would have been utterly impossible for them. As it was then, so it is now, and will be for all ages to come. The so-called respectable people seek Christ but seldom, and do you know the reason? They believe him to be God, it is true, but a God that is too severe, who speaks only of the necessity of bearing the cross, and imposes on his followers fasting, alms, and self-denial. Christ is to them, as it were, too contemptible a God, because he lived in humility and poverty, and died on a gibbet. In fact, the so-called respectable people of the world need no other God; they have one already, a more indulgent god than Christ, for, as St. Paul says: "Their god is their belly."—*Phil.* 3: 19. How much you are indebted to God for having placed you in an ordinary state of life, thus rendering it easy for you to follow Christ!

2. *Great multitudes followed him.* There is no doubt that *the rich* did not follow him. The inordinate love of money occupied their whole heart. Poverty is looked upon as the greatest evil, and the poor man is in the world's eyes an object of contempt. Now, as Christ was poor himself and called the poor blessed, and as he tried to inspire others which the love of poverty, the rich remained away from him. Only once a rich young man came to him, asking him: "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?"—*Matt.* 19: 16. But scarcely had he received the answer, which was not according to his expectation, when he went away sad, and returned no more. Like the so-called respectable people, the rich need not God. They have one already, a visible, palpable god, Mammon. To this god they cling, him they love and serve. And because they worship that god of theirs, they care little about the poor and humble Saviour; and

because they worship that good of theirs, the Saviour pronounced woe against them: "Amen, I say to you that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich a man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 19: 23-24. Return thanks to God that he has given you no riches, that you are born of poor parents, and that by the little you possess of the goods of this world he has made it easy for you to follow Christ.

3. Neither were *the learned in the crowd of people* that followed him. Now and then some Scribes and Pharisees came to him, but not to follow him or to be instructed by him, but to catch him in his speech and to convict him of error. The learned are generally proud. As St. Paul says: "Knowledge puffeth up"—*I. Cor.* 8: 1. They are so captivated with their imaginary knowledge and wisdom that they prefer it to the wisdom of God. Such people seldom go to the humble Jesus, to learn of him and submit to his Word. Therefore few learned men were converted to Christianity in the beginning. On the contrary, they were the greatest and bitterest opponents of Christianity, and in our days are still the greatest enemies of the Church. They affect to despise the doctrines of the Church and set up their own opinions and errors in their stead. They would fain persuade people to listen to them rather than to the Church, nothwithstanding that Christ has said: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. St. Paul calls the Church, not human knowledge and wisdom, the pillar and ground of truth. Does it not seem strangely inconsistent for the learned, who will not acknowledge the infallibility of the Church and the Pope, to claim that prerogative for themselves? And yet Christ declares that the Holy Ghost will remain with his Church for ever and teach her all truth, and that the faith of his Vicar on earth shall never fail, and that he (his Vicar) shall confirm his brethren, and consequently that, in doctrine and in matters of faith, he can never propose an error to be believed as truth. St. Paul does not value the learning of the world, for he says: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (*I. Cor.* 3: 19); and again: "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain" (*I. Cor.* 3: 20); and, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."—*Rom.* 1: 22. St. Augustine, when thinking of the days in which he set such great store by learning said: "The unlearned rise up and carry away the reward of heaven, and we, with all our learning, are plunged into hell." Thank God that he has preserved you from the pride of knowledge, whereby he has made it easy for you to follow your humble Saviour.

Hence the so-called *respectable people*, who are ruled by the concupiscence of the flesh, walk not with Christ, neither do *the rich* who are governed by the concupiscence of the eyes, nor *the learned* who are governed by the pride of life.

PART II.

Who, then, walk with him?

1. First of all, *his Apostles*, and the *other seventy-two*, who were called the disciples of the Lord. They walked with Christ, not only occasionally, but were his constant companions during the whole course of his public life. They remained with him because, during all that time, he instructed them in his doctrine with the greatest love and tenderness, in order to prepare them for their future calling, that of preserving his divine doctrine in its purity and of preaching it to all nations. Their intercourse with Christ did not terminate on the day of his Ascension, but continued thereafter, for they were never separated from his holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, which he communicated to them. Thus, because they were never separated from the Spirit of Truth, they were destined to become the teachers of truth to the whole world. The Apostles and the first disciples of Christ were succeeded by the bishops and priests. These also walked with Jesus at all times, and walk with him still. For, through his immediate assistance and presence with the teaching Church, namely, the bishops and priests, they inculcate now the very identical doctrines which Christ taught his Apostles, and which the Apostles delivered to their successors. No other faith is preached but that of Christ, no other sacraments are administered but those which he instituted, no other sacrifice is offered but that which he offered. In this sense Christ precedes, the priests follow, and our Saviour says of them as he said of his Apostles: "He that heareth you heareth me."—*Luke* 10: 16.

2. Many people walked with Christ: yes, the *common, poor people*. For this reason he says: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." They manifested great zeal in his service, and for the sake of being in his presence feared neither fatigue, heat, nor hunger. They were all attention, to hear his word, to see his miracles, and to enjoy his heavenly countenance; when with him, they felt happy and comforted. It was ever thus. The poor and oppressed of this world cling to Christ. Among them we find the greatest number of his followers, for they know by experience how beautiful, good, and consoling is his religion and his love.

And here it must be added with sadness that not *all*, but only *great multitudes* of the poor, follow Christ at the present day. Groaning, as they are, under the burdens of life, despised by the world for their poverty and insignificance, how many even of the poor turn their backs on the priceless inheritance which Jesus, the Father of the poor, is unceasingly offering them. Earth's wealth, enjoyments, pleasures, are beyond their reach, and heaven they will none of. Pitiable indeed is the condition of the poor who are at the same time poor and godless. No ease, no happiness here; no hope of it hereafter.

PERORATION.

Let us be steadfast in our adherence to the Catholic Church, founded by Jesus Christ, in our adherence to the Pope, the common father of the whole Christian family; and in our loyalty to our bishops and priests, who are for us the immediate vicars of Christ. Confess your faith fearlessly and courageously when and wherever necessary, and lead a life worthy of the Catholic name, a life replete with works of charity, adorned with purity of morals, sanctified by prayer, frequent confession and communion. In this way we shall walk spiritually with Christ through this earthly lifs, and, after our departure hence, remain in his society for ever and ever. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

EPISTLE. *Rom.* 13: 8-10. Brethren: Owe no man anything, but to love one another. For he that loveth his neighbor, hath fulfilled the law. For Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet. And if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The love of our neighbor worketh no evil. Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

In the epistle of this day the Apostle exhorts us to fulfil our duties towards the temporal authorities: that is, to pay our lawful debts and taxes, and render to those in office the honor due to them. All power is from God, and they that possess it are, so far as its exercise is concerned, ministers of God for the time being. Hence it is their duty to provide for the peace and security of their subjects, and to procure by proper legislation their temporal welfare. To accomplish this they need money; therefore the payment of taxes is a duty from which no one can exempt himself without sin. We must also honor those who are in office, for in temporal affairs they are the ministers of God. Further on the Apostle speaks of a duty which we owe, not only to the temporal authorities, but to all men; namely, the love of our neighbor, which he represents—

I. As an ever-enduring debt;
II. As the fulfilment of the law.

PART I.

As an ever-enduring debt.

Owe no man anything, but to love one another. It is a duty of justice to discharge all our debts towards our neighbor. If we

owe a person anything, we must endeavor to pay the debt at the appointed time, or at least as soon as possible. Having paid what we owed him, he can demand nothing more, for we have satisfied the duty of justice. It is quite different, however, in regard to love. This always remains a debt which we owe our neighbor, and from which we can never free ourselves, no matter how many kind services we may render. When Peter asked our Lord, "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus answered: "I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times."—*Matt.* 18: 21, 22. Thus according to these words of Christ, we must *always* forgive those who offend us and *always* love them.

1. *The nature of love requires this.* "Charity," says the Apostle, "never falleth away."—*I. Cor.* 13: 8. The love of our neighbor is founded on the love of God. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?"—*I. John* 4: 20. Now, as we must always love God, so we must never cease to love our neighbor, for at the very moment we should cease to love our neighbor, we should also cease to love God. He who loves his neighbor sincerely is kind and friendly, not now and then only but on all occasions; nay, the more good he does, the more his heart expands and the stronger he feels himself urged to new works of charity. Fire becomes stronger the more we add fuel to it; in like manner love grows by acts of charity. Theodoret says: "The fulfilment of duty increases the desire to do it, for it renders love warmer."

2. *The love of God towards mankind in general.* The human family has been in existence for nearly six thousand years. In this long period of time not a day has passed in which God has not given proofs of his love to men. Does he not give them daily and hourly what they need for their subsistence? Does he not continually impart to them the graces necessary to work out their eternal salvation? How kindly he deals with even the greatest sinners! He is patient with them and gives them time for repentance, he prepares for them the most favorable opportunities for their conversion, endeavors to win them by benefits, or to deter them from evil by punishments; in his wisdom and love he makes use of all means to save them. Truly, "God is charity."—*I. John* 4: 16.

3. *The example of Christ.* "Having loved his own, who were in the world, he loved them to the end."—*John* 13: 1. Christ becomes man, leads a life of poverty, humility, and misery upon earth; he teaches, works miracles, feeds the hungry, heals the sick, raises the dead to life, endures hunger and thirst, persecution

and sufferings of every kind, and at length dies on the cross for sinful man! But this is not yet the fulness of the love of Christ; for as the life of the spirit survived the death of the body on the cross, so did his love. He loves us continually and will love us to the end of time; he causes his gospel to be preached to us, offers himself daily for us in the holy mass, and purifies and sanctifies us in the sacraments. Since he is really and truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, we can go to him as often as we please and make known to him our troubles, and we always find comfort and relief; he is to-day the same Lord who said eighteen hundred years ago: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11: 28. This is still not the fulness of the love of Christ. He lives not only to the end of the world, but for ever; therefore he loves us not only to the end of the world, but without end—for all eternity; nay, at the end of the world his love, properly speaking, only begins; for it is then that he will receive us into heaven, body and soul, and make us sharers of his everlasting glory.

4. *The example of the Apostles and the Saints.* Their whole life was one of love, they gave themselves up for the welfare of their fellow-men, they never wearied in doing good to their neighbor; when they had performed one work of charity, they commenced another, and the days of their earthly life formed, as it were, an unbroken chain of works of love and benevolence. They estemeed themselves happy in being allowed to sacrifice for their fellow-men all that they possessed, even life itself. And they who did such great things were men subject to the same infirmites as ourselves; but charity made them strong, so that when there was a question of doing good to their fellow-men, they surmounted all obstacles and made every sacrifice. Even now, after having entered into the joys of heaven, the ardor of their holy love is not diminished. They are our mediators and intercessors before the throne of God, that we may finish our course successfully and be admitted into their blessed society in heaven.

Let us be moved to exercises of charity by the generous conduct of those noble souls; and if we should receive nothing but ingratitude from our fellow-men in return for the good we do them, this must be no reason for us to deprive them of our charity or to diminish our love. Let us show that we are *children of our heavenly Father*, who makes his sun to shine on the good and the bad; *that we are disciples of Christ*, who prayed for his enemies and murderers on the cross; *that we are imitators of the saints*, who never wearied of doing good to their fellow-men.

Part II.

As the fulfilment of the law.

1. *He that loveth his neighbor, hath fulfilled the law.* The law of God commands us to avoid evil and to do good. Now, if love is the fulfilment of the law, it must do good to our neighbor, not evil. The Apostle expresses this in the words: "Charity does no evil," and enumerates the commandments which forbid sins against our neighbor.

(*a.*) *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* He who loves his neighbor will carefully guard against committing adultery or any sin against purity. Adultery and every kind of impurity are abominations in the sight of God, and he who commits such sins shall not possess the kingdom of God.—*Ephes.* 5: 5. He who commits the sin of impurity with another, proves himself to be that person's greatest enemy, because he robs him of the grace of God and delivers him to perdition.

(*b.*) *Thou shalt not kill.* Life is, of all earthly goods, not only the greatest, but also the most important as regards eternity, because it is given us as a means for obtaining eternal salvation. He, therefore, who takes the life of another, robs him of the most precious of all goods, the means of obtaining his salvation; nay, if his victim should be in a state of mortal sin, he robs him of his salvation and plunges him into eternal damnation. This is a sin against the love of our neighbor, which in greatness surpasses almost all others.

(*c.*) *Thou shalt not steal.* Every one wishes to keep what is justly his own, and is naturally unwilling either to have any part thereof purloined or injured by another. He who loves his neighbor shuns all sins against the seventh commandment, because the goods of others are sacred to him. He will not appropriate to himself a cent that belongs to another, nor deceive, nor cheat, nor overcharge any one. He is careful not to defraud any one, pays his laborers their hire, liquidates his lawful debts; in short, is not guilty of any injustice.

(*d.*) *Thou shalt not bear false witness.* Lying and slanderous tongues frequently destroy peace and concord among men, rob them of their good name, and cause a great deal of harm. He who loves his neighbor does not bring him into ill repute, nor calumniate him; he does not report and magnify his faults, nor judge him rashly, nor bear false witness against him before

magistrates. He guards against all these sins, because they originate in hatred and enmity, and therefore spring from the very passions which stand in direct opposition to charity.

(*e.*) *Thou shalt not covet.* Inordinate desires are the source of numberless sins. Unless they be restrained, tranquillity and contentment can not exist. He who loves his neighbor suppresses at once all impure and avaricious desires, preserves a pure heart, is satisfied with what we has, and leaves every one in the possession of what is his. He knows not envy. "The love of our neighbor worketh no evil."

2. He who loves his neighbor is well disposed towards him, and this kind disposition urges him, not only to wish him well, but also to do him acts of kindness, as often as an opportunity present itself. This love of our neighbor manifests itself—

(*a.*) *By corporal works of mercy.* A Christian who sincerely loves his fellow-men does not turn the poor and needy from his door, but has compassion on them and assists them as far as he can; he feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, harbors strangers, visits the sick. We can not find a saint who did not more or less perform these works of mercy and charity. If we wish to become saints and be saved, we must practice the corporal works of mercy, for they are the fruits of charity, without which we can not please God and be saved. That we may not omit them, let us frequently ponder on the sentence which, on the day of judgment, will be passed on the unmerciful.

(*b.*) *By spiritual works of mercy.* These works are more precious and meritorious before God than the corporal works of mercy, because they have the salvation of our neighbor for their direct object, which is of greater value than temporal welfare. Of those that practice these works the Scripture says: "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity."—*Dan.* 12: 3. He who neglects these works when he might practice them, acts most uncharitably, and may expect a severe judgment. Every one can practice works of charity, for though he may not be able to preach like the Apostles and their successors, yet he can give good example to his fellow-men and pray for them, and these are two good works of mercy, by which many immortal souls can be saved from perdition.

PERORATION.

Thus love is the fulfilling of the law. He who loves his neighbor according to the example of Christ, does him no evil, but on

the contrary, much good, and satisfies thereby the law which commands us to do good, and avoid evil. Oh, if a true, sincere, brotherly love existed among men, we should not see so many disorders, sins, vices, misery, and poverty, and the earth would become to some extent a paradise. Reflect often upon the beautiful words of the epistle: *Owe no man anything, but to love one another.* Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Gospel. *Matt.* 8: 23-27. At that time: When Jesus entered into the boat, his disciples followed him; and behold, a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish. And Jesus saith to them: Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm. But the men wondered, saying: What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE TEMPEST AT SEA.

The wonderful incident related in the gospel of this day occurred in the second year of the public life of Christ. Great multitudes had assembled at the Lake of Genesareth to hear the words of life that ever fell from his sacred lips. This lake, sometimes called the Sea of Galilee, was about fifteen miles long and seven wide. Our Lord entered a boat, and from it taught the people, who were standing on the shore, propounding to them the beautiful parables of the wheat and the cockle, of the grain of mustard-seed, and the leaven. In the evening he ordered his disciples to pass over the sea to the opposite shore, and they did as they were commanded, taking him in the boat: "And there were other ships with him."—*Mark* 4. What occured on this passage we shall consider to-day, namely:

I. The tempest at sea;
II. The conduct of the disciples;
III. The conduct of Jesus during the storm.

PART I.

And behold, a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves. Storms, even on land, are terrible and often cause great destruction of property and loss of life, but they are still more terrible and dangerous on the sea. How many ships are lost every year in such storms! The storm which overtook the disciples of our Lord, while crossing the Galilean Sea, was not an ordinary one, but as the gospel remarks, it was a *great tempest*, and as the boat was small it was in imminent danger.

What does this tempest indicate?

1. *The persecutions of the Church.* The Church had scarcely been established by our Lord when enemies arose against her on all sides; first the Jews, who persecuted and put the Apostles and disciples to death; then the Gentiles, who for three hundred years raged with fire and sword against the Christians, made more than thirty millions of martyrs, and swore by their gods that they would not desist from persecuting the Christians till even the very name of Christian should be destroyed from the face of the earth. The Church is destined to suffer such persecutions at all times, and in the nineteen centuries of her existence there is not one to which she can not point as having produced martyrs. Besides these external enemies, the Church has always had foes within her own bosom, namely, false teachers and heretics, who after apostatizing from her, attacked her with the greatest hatred, reviled, calumniated her, and endeavored in every way to destroy her. The Church is greatly persecuted in our days, in Europe and elsewhere, and her enemies labor to accomplish her destruction. But we need not wonder at this; Christ foretold that his Church would suffer from these persecutions.—*Matt.* 10: 17, 18, 21, 22. It is persecutions that characterize the Catholic Church as the true Church, founded by Christ. If the world were ever to declare friendship with her, she would cease to be the bride of Christ; she would be the harlot of Satan. This must be our consolation in these days when the Church is so much reviled and persecuted.

2. *The affliction of the pious.* Sufferings and tribulations are generally the lot of pious Christians. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution."—*II. Tim.* 3: 12. Proof hereof is found in the lives of the saints. Those especially who are converted from error and sin must be prepared for persecution. How bitterly the Jews hated Paul after his conversion

to Christianity! They hunted him from place to place, gave him stripes, stoned him and cast him into prison, brought various false accusations against him, and everywhere sought his life.—*II. Cor.* 11: 23, *et seq.* What is done in our days if a Protestant or an unbeliever is converted to the Catholic faith? Does he not meet with scorn, ridicule, and hatred on the part of his former co-religionists? Do they not seek to render his step suspicious in every way, and to ascribe to him an ignoble purpose? Is he not accused of fanaticism and mental weakness? Must he not be prepared to suffer temporal loss? A pious Christian must not fear such afflictions and persecutions, nor grieve over them, but rather console himself with the words of Christ: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall speak all that is evil against you untruly for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 11, 12.

3. *Temptations.* Every man must endure them, especially pious persons. "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and *prepare thy soul for temptation.* For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation."—*Ecclus.* 2: 1, 5. God has the best intentions when he sends us temptations; he desires—

(*a.*) *To preserve us in humility.* If we were never tempted, we might set great store by our virtue and holiness; but as we are tempted to various and even the most shameful sins, we arrive thereby at the knowledge that we are miserable creatures, prone to every evil, and that if God did not always assist us by his grace, we should fall into the greatest sins.

(*b.*) *To increase our zeal for virtue.* If we suffered no temptations, we should be in danger of becoming lukewarm, of relaxing our vigilance, of neglecting prayer and the practice of mortification. But temptations compel us to walk carefully, and to use the necessary means for overcoming them, such as prayer, meditation, interior and exterior mortification, and especially the reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

(*c.*) *To give us an opportunity of increasing our merits and our beatitude in heaven.* As often as we overcome a temptation we practice a meritorious work, which will be rewarded in heaven. "My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work.—*St. James* 1: 2, 3, 4.

PART II.

And his disciples came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish.

1. *His disciples came to him.* They were right in coming to him in their affliction and necessity, for to whom shall we have recourse but to God, who has both the power and the will to help us? We may, in dangers, misfortunes, and sickness, call upon men and adopt natural means of relief, but we must not disregard God, since it is from him alone that all help comes.

2. *They awaked him.* Jesus was, as St. Mark says (4: 38), "in the hinder part of the ship, sleeping upon a pillow." The Apostles and disciples, alarmed at the violence of the storm, which was dashing the furious waves over the sides of the little vessel, hastened to awake their divine Master from his sleep, for they had done all that energy and skill could suggest, but to no purpose —they seemed doomed. We also must awake him, that he may help us; in other words, we must pray with fervor and perseverance It was thus the woman of Chanaan prayed. Many are cold and careless when they pray; their prayer is full of distractions and without attention or devotion; they can not earnestly wish to receive what they pray for. Others do not pray with confidence and perseverance, and if they do not obtain at once what they ask, they say it is useless to pray. What unchristian language! Is it for us or for God to say how, where, and when the relief prayed for shall be granted? Oh, let us leave all to God.

3. *Lord, save us.* In these words the disciples express their faith in Christ and acknowledge that he, as God, has the power to help them. We also must pray with faith and confidence, if we wish to be heard. Nothing displeases God more than distrust. Christians who question his goodness, though not his power, offer a great injury to him and can not expect to obtain the object of their prayer. Before we begin to pray, let us make an act of confidence and faith, and say within ourselves: "God will certainly hear my prayer and grant my request, if what I ask be conducive to his honor and my salvation."

4. *We perish.* The disciples had reason to say so, for they were in extreme danger. But if their faith hath been strong, they would, even in extreme danger, have consoled themselves with the thought: "Jesus is with us; how much soever the storm may rage, we are safe, we can not perish." In bodily dangers, even lukewarm Christians call upon God and his saints for help;

but what do they do in temptations, when they are in danger of falling into mortal sins? They never think of calling upon Christ like his disciples: *Lord, save us, we perish.* Is it not a greater evil to suffer injury to the soul than to the body? Oh, do not omit in all temptations and dangers to have recourse to God by fervent prayer.

Part III.

1. The storm raged, tossing the sea into mountains of white-crested waves which were breaking over the sides, so that the boat rocked to and fro, with every timber creaking; in the plain language of Scripture, it was *covered with waves*, aud seemed every moment to be on the point of going to pieces, and yet *he was asleep.* We must not suppose that this was only a feigned or apparent sleep. As man, Christ had everything in common with us, sin expected. He was succeptible to heat and cold, hunger and thirst, fatigue and sleep. The slumbering Jesus reveals himself as a true man, but when he rises to command the wind and the waves, he manifested himself as true God. Christ sleeps during the greatest storm. He who has a good conscience preserves peace and repose of heart in all the storms of life. Thus Peter slept peacefully in the night, although he knew that he was to be executed the next day. Yes, a good conscience is a soft pillow. How does a man sleep who has a wicked conscience? What torments does not the dark night cause him! Oh! preserve always a good conscience that in the evening of your life you may be able to to say with David: "In peace in the self same I will sleep and I will rest."—*Ps.* 4: 9. Christ sleeps, but his divine eye is open and observes everything that occurs: "I sleep and my heart watcheth."—*Cant.* 5: 2. Let us not despond when in our tribulation Jesus seems to sleep; he will arise and deliver us from danger in his own good time.

2. *And Jesus said to them: Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?* The disciples deserved this rebuke, because after so many miracles of mercy and love, they yielded to pusillanimity and despondency. Many Christians also deserve this rebuke far more, for they believe in and acknowledge a divine Providence, and, nevertheless, lose courage in every difficulty, and give way to despair like heathens. Many even do not wait till tribulation overtakes them; they are full of cares about the future, and are afraid of sufferings which very likely will never come, or which, even if they should come, God will direct in such a manner that all will turn out for the best. Far from you be such pusillanimity, which is unworthy of a Christian; stand firm as a rock in your confidence in God in every situation of life, and say with David:

"Our God is our refuge and our strength, a helper in troubles which have found us exceedingly. Therefore we will not fear, when the earth shall be troubled and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea."—*Ps.* 45: 2, 3.

3. *Then rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm.* Here we behold Jesus Christ as the Lord of nature, as the omnipotent God, to whom the irrational and inanimate creation is subject. What shall we think of men who acknowledge God as their Lord and Creator, and from whom they daily receive so many benefits, and who yet show their ingratitude towards him, and in so many ways transgress his commandments? Is not this a criminal outrage? God himself expresses, as it were, his astonishment at such conduct, exclaiming by the Prophet: "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have brought up children, and exalted them, but they have despised me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known me, and my people hath not understood."—*Is.* 1: 2, 3. St. Anthony of Padua, one day, when the people would not listen to his sermon, repaired to a river and commanded the fish to assemble and hear him preach. They obeyed, and listened to his sermon. God, without doubt, permitted this miracle, to make men ashamed of their disobedience and to give them a clear idea of its guilt. In truth, he who will not obey God and his representatives on earth, will be forced to obey the devil in hell. Like this storm on the sea, all the occurences and events in nature have their cause in the will of God, and are under his guidance. There is no such thing as fate; the doctrine of fatalism will, however, prove fatal to its adherents, as it did to Napoleon, who was always wont to speak of his "star." Hence, beware of expressing your displeasure at the events of nature, such as heat or cold, rain or drought, frost or thaw, and much more ought you to avoid cursing them, for this is in reality dissatisfaction with the ordinances of God and blasphemy against him. God rules the elements, and if the evil spirits sometimes exert great influence over them, it is only by his permission. Men may speak of the "fire fiend," but by these conflagrations, inundations, and such like calamities God brings sinful man to a sense of his duty.

Whatever God does is well done, and if it does not happen to accord with our wishes, let us submit ourselves, in all the relations of life, with filial confidence and resignation to his benign and all-wise guidance and providence.

PERORATION.

The gospel remarks at its conclusion that the people who were eye-witnesses of the wonders performed by Jesus asked in astonishment: *What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him? We* have no reason to be astonished at this miracle, for we know and believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is truly God, and it costs him not the least labor to calm the tempestuous sea. We do not wonder at the miracle which Christ wrought, but we adore him with the most profound veneration, and in humility and obedience subject ourselves in all things to his holy will. If he visits us with tribulations and sufferings, let us pray to him with confidence; and in our passage through this stormy ocean of life, let us continually recommend ourselves to his protection, that we may safely arrive in the harbor of a happy eternity. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

When Jesus entered into the boat, his disciples followed him — *Matt.* 8: 23.

By the boat, into which Christ entered, as also his disciples with him, the interpreters of Sacred Scripture, and the Fathers, understand the Catholic Church. The Church is that boat which, though tossed by the many storms of persecution on the ocean of this world, is under the immediate protection of Christ, her Divine Founder and Pilot, and will therefore most assuredly arrive safely in the harbor of eternal salvation with all her precious freight of human souls. Christ is in her, and although he may seem to sleep while the tempest dashes the waves of the hatred and passion of wicked men against her, yet Peter is at the helm, and in his own good time the Divine Pilot will arise and command the sea, and there will be a great calm. Nor will he ever abandon her, or enter any of the many miserable barks which are seen floating at random without compass or rudder. Outside

the Catholic Church there is a great number of religious denominations, all asserting that they are the bark in which Christ is found; that theirs is the Church established by him. But they claim this without any guarantee. And why? Because they are destitute of the marks by which the true Church, established by Christ is known; for they are neither One, Holy, Catholic, nor Apostolic. The Catholic Church alone possesses these four marks, as I shall show you to-day and on the following Sundays. I shall speak to-day about the *Unity* of the Church and show—

I. That the Church of Christ must be one;
II. That the Catholic Church is really one;
III. That all other religious denominations are destitute of this mark.

PART I.

The true Church established by Jesus Christ must be one; that is, *she must always have the same faith, the same sacrifice, the same sacraments, and the same head.* This evidently follows—

1. *Because Jesus Christ established but one Church* "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church."—*Matt.* 16: 18. Christ speaks here only of one foundation and of one Church. He did not say, "and upon this rock I will build *my Churches*," but "*my Church.*" Again, he compares his Church to one shepherd and one fold; to one field; to one net—comparisons which allow us to infer but one Church, and no more. St. Paul describes the Church as the mystical body of Christ.—*I. Cor.* 12: 25-27; *Ephes.* 4: 11, 12. As Christ has only one natural body, so he has only one mystical body; therefore, there is only one Church.

2. *Because Christ taught only one faith,* ordained for all men the same means of salvation, or sacraments, and, in order to avoid all divisions, established one head. How much he desired that his Church should possess this universal unity is clearly seen in the solemn prayer to his heavenly Father shortly before his death: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me: that they may be one, as we also are."—*John* 17: 11. "And not for them (the Apostles) only do I pray, but for them also who, through their word, shall believe in me. That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."—*John* 17: 20, 21.

3. *Because the Apostles insist upon unity in matters of faith, and warn their followers solemnly and earnestly against disunion and*

division. "Be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."—*Ephes.* 4: 3, 6. "If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him: God speed you. For he that saith unto him: God speed you (i. e., makes familiar with those who have prevaricated and abandoned the true faith), communicateth with his wicked works."—*II. John* 10: 11.

4. *From the doctrine of the Fathers of the Church.* St. Athanasius says: "Unity is the mark of truth, and where it is wanting you must not seek the true Church." The Fathers especially acknowledge the first and principal mark of the true Church to be in the common head, in the Apostolic See of Rome. Thus St. Jerome says, in his letter to Pope Damasus: "I am united with your Holiness, that is, with the Apostolic See; for I know that it is the rock on which the Church was built. He who eats the Lamb outside of this house, is not a believer, not a Christian."

The true Church therefore must have the same faith, the same means of grace, and one common head. Where we find this unity, there is truth; and where we find it not, there is error.

Part II.

The Catholic Church is one—

1. *In faith.* If we look back through all the Christian centuries, we shall always find in the Catholic Church the same faith, and not one example can be adduced in which a doctrine which she once proposed to be believed had ever been revoked or altered. What the Catholic clergy preach to-day, Catholic priests preached eighteen hundred years ago; the doctrine which we now teach in our churches and schools is the same as that which a St. Cyril preached in Alexandria, a St. Augustine in Hippo, a St. Chrysostom at Constantinople. Local separations among Catholics caused no variation in faith; it is everywhere the same. Catholics in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia, all agree in matters of faith. Religious books and catechisms contain the same doctrines concerning faith and morals. Listen to the beautiful description which St. Irenæus gives of the unity of faith in the Catholic Church: "Although spread over the whole globe, the Church faithfully preserves the doctrine delivered to her, as if she inhabited but one house; everywhere believes the same doctrine, as if she had but one soul; and everywhere teaches the same doctrine, as if she had but one voice. Although the languages differ, yet the doctrine taught is one and the same." The most

perfect unity in faith must prevail in the Catholic Church, for a Catholic can not and is not allowed to believe anything but what the Church teaches. As soon as he obstinately denies even one single doctrine, he ceases to be a Catholic, and is excluded from the communion of the Church.

2. *In the sacraments and in the holy sacrifice.* Wherever a Catholic congregation is found, we find seven sacraments, and this number has been neither increased nor diminished since the times of the Apostles. We can prove from tradition that every sacrament was received and administered in the very beginning of the Church. Always and everywhere in the Catholic Church the seven sacraments were and are administered under the same conditions and with the application of the same visible signs, and the belief in their effects was and is everywhere and always the same. The same must be said of the sacrifice of the mass. The Apostles offered this sacrifice, as we read in the Acts, and from that time to the present day it is offered wherever there are Catholic priests.

3. *In her head.* As members of the Church, both priests and laity acknowledge and venerate the Pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth and as their chief pastor, and render him cheerful obedience in everything concerning religion. This was the case always and in all places, as we see from the testimony of the Fathers of the Church and of Church history. Irenæus, who was a pupil of a disciple of the Apostles, refers the heretics of his time to the Roman Church, "for," he says, "with his Church every other Church (that is, all the faithful), because of her superior rank, must necessarily agree." Catholics from the very beginning, when contentions arose in matters of religion, appealed to the Pontiff and submitted to his decisions. The principle was always maintained, that only he is a Catholic who submits to the Pope; hence St. Jerome says: "He who adheres not to the Pope, adheres not to Christ," and St. Cyprian: "He who forsakes the See of Peter, upon which the Church is founded, can not say that he still belongs to the Church." The Catholic Church therefore possesses ***Unity***, a mark of the true Church established by Christ.

PART III.

All religious denominations separated from the Catholic Church are destitute of this mark. We shall speak only of the modern religious sects which, came into existence about three hundred years ago and subsequently, and which are comprised under the name of "Protestants."

1. *They are destitute of unity in faith.* That which St. Jerome said of the sects of his time may be said of all the sects of our days, namely, that, when there is a question of attacking the Catholic Church, they are one, as Herod and Pilate were when there was a question of inflicting suffering upon our Saviour, but in everything else they are at variance with one another. They are all one only on one point—in their hatred against the Spouse of Christ. Even the very founders of these sects frequently changed their doctrines. Thus Luther says: "We confess that there is much Christian good in the Papacy; nay, every Christian good." Again he says: "The Papacy is nothing but the impudence of the devil, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot." At one time he says: "Matrimony is a sacrament," and at another: "We must not make matrimony a sacrament." The same contradictions are found in the writings of the other innovators. The new doctrine was scarcely introduced, when sect arose against sect, and the rents became so great, and the divisions so many, that Luther's friend, Melancthon, wrote: "The whole river Elbe can not give water enough sufficiently to deplore in tears the mischief of the shattered and disunited 'Reformation.'" In the course of time things grew worse; and at present among a thousand Protestants you will scarcely find two who, in matters of faith, agree on any one point. Unity of faith is absolutely impossible with them, because, according to their doctrine, every one has a right to interpret the Bible according to his own private judgment.

2. *They are destitute of unity as regards the means of grace.*

(*a.*) *The sacrifice of the mass.* The Augsburg Confession declares that "the mass is to be retained, and to be celebrated with the greatest veneration." In another Lutheran confession we read: "The people are to be taught that the mass, being a human invention, can be omitted without sin;" and the Catechism of Heidelberg calls the mass "a damnable idolatry." The Anglican Church says in her articles that the "Sacrifices of Masses are blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits", but now-a-days many Anglicans assert the contrary.

(*b.*) *The sacraments.* In regard to these, all Protestants are not even united as to whether Christ has really instituted sacraments or not. Neither are they all united in regard to the number; some admit two, others three. Again, they disagree in regard to what the sacraments are, and their effects. Many even look upon baptism as a mere ceremony, and many never have their children baptized at all.

(*c.*) *A head.* Protestants have no common head. Their religious rulers are the kings and princes of the country, no matter whether they are men or women, of this or that creed. Instead of one Pope, they have many popes, for the religion of every principality or kingdom has its own head, and is in no connection with others. From this it necessarily follows, that the religious denominations separated from the Catholic Church can not be the true Church of Christ, because they do not possess unity, one of the necessary marks of the true Church.

PERORATION.

Return thanks to God that you are members of the Catholic Church. She is the Church of Christ, one to-day, yesterday, and for ever. As Catholics you are most intimately united with one another, for you all have the same faith, the same means of grace, the same head, and you form one family of God upon earth. Avoid disunion and division, believe firmly what the Catholic Church proposes to your faith, make use of the sacraments, and render her obedience in all things pertaining to the salvation of your soul. Remember the words of St. Cyprian: "He who has not the Church for his mother, can not have God for his father." Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

SUNDAY.

Lord, save us, we perish.—Matt. 8: 25.

As long as we are pilgrims on earth, we shall be surrounded by great spiritual dangers. Sometimes it is Satan, who goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; sometimes the world, which endeavors by stratagem to decoy us into its snares; and sometimes our own flesh, which becomes the confederate of Satan to allure us into sin. We must pass through the boisterous sea of this world, where winds and storms are frequent; our bark may be almost covered by the waves of continual temptations: but we must not lose courage in these dan-

gers, for we have a life-boat in prayer. Let us cry out in every danger with the Apostles, full of confidence: *Lord, save us, we perish,* and Christ will save us. Let us practice prayer, particularly on Sunday, for this is a day of prayer, instituted in order that we may honor God by fervent religious exercises, and implore his gifts and graces for time and eternity. I shall give you to-day the necessary instruction on the proper observance of Sunday, and explain to you—

I. The names of this day;
II. At what time Christians began to observe Sunday;
III. Of what it reminds us.

Part I.

1. The ecclesiastical name for Sunday is the *Lord's Day.* It is justly called the day of the Lord, because it is the day on which Jesus Christ rose from the dead and accomplished the work of our Redemption; also because God sanctified this day and wishes us to employ it exculsively for his honor. In this sense St. Augustine says: "It is called the Lord's day, that on it we may abstain from servile works and devote ourselves to the divine service; that we may honor and celebrate it on account of the hope which it gives us of our resurrection." Sunday was called the Lord's day even in the earliest ages of the Church. St. Ignatius, a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, in a letter to the Magnesians, says: "Celebrate no longer the Sabbath, but sanctify the *day of the Lord,* for through Christ and his death we have received life" (by his Resurrection on a Sunday).

2. The day of the Lord is also called *Sunday.* This name likewise is of very ancient date. Justin the Martyr, in the second century, says: "We all assemble on *Sunday,* because it is the day on which God in the creation of the world separated light from darkness, and on which our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead." Even the pagans had a day which they called Sunday, in honor of the sun, and this was the first day of the week. The Christians also called the first day of the week Sunday, and celebrated it; but they scrupulously guarded against the erroneous opinion that they, like the pagans, practiced idolatry and adored the sun as a god; they gave to their Sunday a Christian meaning, for they celebrated it in honor of Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice, who with the light of his grace illuminates, warms, and fertilizes the world. Hence St. Ambrose says: "The day of the Lord is venerable and solemn to us, because on it the Saviour, the rising sun, after having dispelled the darkness of hell, shines in the glory of the Resurrection; for this reason it is called

Sunday, because Christ, the rising Sun of Justice, illumines it."

Since Sunday is the *day of the Lord*, devote it to the Lord, and do not, by dissipation and vice, make it a *day of the devil*. Celebrate it in honor of Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice; return thanks to him for the light of faith with which he has enlightened you; walk in this light and so let the light of your good example shine before your fellow-men that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven.

PART II.

The Christians began the celebration of Sunday as far back as the Apostolic times. In proof thereof we have—

1. *The Sacred Scriptures.* We read in the Acts of the Apostles (20: 7): "And on the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, being to depart on the morrow, and he continued his speech until midnight." Since the first day of the week is Sunday, and the expression "to break bread" intimates the celebration of the sacrifice of the mass, we see that Christians, even in the time of the Apostles, held their meetings for divine worship on Sundays, and therefore kept the Sunday holy. "On the first day of the week let every one of you put apart with himself, laying up what it shall well please him, that when I come, the collection be not then to be made."—*I. Cor.* 16: 2. This passage again is a clear proof of the celebration of Sunday, for the Apostle appointed the first day of the week, that is, Sunday, for the gathering of contributions for charitable purposes, only for the reason that it was a holiday and the Christians assembled on that day for public worship.

2. *The most ancient Fathers of the Church.* Justin the Martyr speaks of the celebration of Sunday as a universally observed custom. Among other things he says: "On the day of the sun all who live in the city and in the country assemble together in one place. The beginning is made with the reading of the Apostles and the Prophets as far as time permits. After the reading, the priest who officiates makes a discourse to the assembly, to instruct and exhort them to put into practice the sublime maxims of virtue and religion which they have heard. Then we all rise to say our prayers in common. We pray for ourselves, for those who are at that time to be baptized, and for all people and nations, that they may come to the knowledge of the truth, may lead a holy life, keep the commandments, and obtain eternal salvation. After these prayers we salute one another with the kiss of

peace. Then, bread, as well as a chalice with wine and water, is given to him who presides. He takes them, gives thanks to the Father through the name of the Son and the Holy Ghost, and makes a long act of thanksgiving for these gifts, which in grace he has given us. The prayers and the thanksgiving being ended, all the people, standing, say Amen, which, being a Hebrew word, means: Yes, certainly and truly, be it so. After that, those who are called deacons distribute to every one present the bread and the wine and water blessed by the thanksgiving, and bring it also to the absent. We call this nourishment the Eucharist, and no one is allowed to participate in it unless he believes in the truth of our doctrine, and by the forgiveness of sin and a new life is washed and lives according to the doctrine of Christ. For we take them, not as common bread and common drink, but as the flesh and blood of our Redeemer." From the words of this Father of the Church we see that the early Christians celebrated their divine worship on Sundays in the same manner as we do to-day; they heard the Word of God, assisted at the sacrifice of the mass and communicated with the officiating priest.

Part III.

1. Sunday reminds us of our *Creation*, *Redemption*, and *Sanctification*. In the Old Law the Sabbath, our Saturday, was celebrated in memory of the creation of the world.—*Exod.* 20: 11. As God was engaged six days in the work of creation, and on the seventh day rested, so men should work six days at their temporal pursuits and rest on the seventh, in order to devote themselves exclusively to the service ot God, their Lord and Creator. If men had remained innocent they could have celebrated their Sabbath in holy joy, but after the fall of man this was no longer possible, for every Sabbath recalled to their mind the sad fact that they had sinned and merited the displeasure of God and punishment. A new Sabbath was to be instituted, with a mystery as the basis, over which men could again truly rejoice. This was done. By the mercy of God a second creation was accomplished, through which the evil which the sin of man had brought upon the first was removed and repaired. This second creation is the Redemption, by which Christ has re-created us, that is, called us into a new life, the life of grace. From the death of sin he has called us to the life of justice, from being slaves of Satan to the glory of being the children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven.—*John* 3: 3; *Rom.* 8: 17. Christ accomplished this second, spiritual creation on a Sunday, namely, on Easter Sunday, when he rose from the dead; and he completed and perfected his work when he sent the Holy Ghost to be the animating soul of this new and beautiful creation of divine

ove. The descent of the Holy Ghost also occurred on a Sunday, on Whit-Sunday. As Sunday is the first day of the week, therefore the day on which the work of the creation was begun, it reminds us also of the first creation, and teaches us at the same time that we are not to spend it in effeminate ease, as the Jews spent their sabbath, but in holy employment, as God also was active on that day, beginning the work of creation. Thus Sunday brings the three great benefits which we owe to the most holy Trinity before our mind; namely, our Creation, our Redemption, and our Sanctification. The day of the Lord, says Pope Leo the Great, has received an exalted significance by the mysterious dispensation of the gifts of divine grace, and by the completion of all the more prominent institutions of salvation ordained by Christ. On this day the work of Creation was begun; by the Resurrection of Christ death was conquered; and true life began by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles.

2. It reminds us of the three cycles of festivals during the ecclesiastical year. Sundays stand in intimate connection with the three principal feasts of the year, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Nearly all the Sundays of the year are designated from one or other of these festivals, as being a Sunday of Advent, and so referring to Christmas; or after Easter, or Pentecost. It follows, that, besides their general signification, Sundays have also a particular one, according to the cycle in which any particular Sunday is found. It may belong to the Christmas Sundays, the Easter Sundays, or the Sundays of Pentecost. The Sundays in the first cycle of festivals referring to the feast of Christmas, remind us of the words of Christ: "God so loved the world as to give his only be-gotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have life everlasting."—*John* 3: 16. The Sundays in the second cycle of festivals have reference to Easter, and remind us, in the words of St. Paul, "that Christ died for all; that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again."—*II. Cor.* 5: 15. The Sundays in the third cycle of festivals have the feast of Pentecost for their centre, and represent to us the promise of Christ: "And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world can not receive."—*John* 14: 16, 17. Consequently, Sundays remind us not only of these three principal benefits, our Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification in general, but also of particular truths and graces, which the principal feasts, preceding and following, include in themselves.

PERORATION.

I have now given you, in general, the necessary instruction on Sunday; you know the names, the origin, and the significance of this holy day. Be careful to celebrate Sundays as becomes devout Christians. Guard against certain sins which are usually committed on Sundays. Make a resolution, as long as God gives you life and health, to attend mass, and if possible, vespers also. Esteem yourselves happy in having the opportunity of going to confession and communion every Sunday. Spend some time on this day in spiritual reading; perform if you can, some of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Observe for the future the Sundays and holidays is such a manner that on your death-bed you can look back upon them with comfort, and may hope to be called by God to the eternal rest of heaven, which they symbolize. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE BOAT ON THE LAKE OF GENESARETH A SYMBOL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

And behold, a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves; but he was asleep.—*Matt.* 8: 24.

The lake or sea of which the gospel of this day makes mention was the Lake of Genesareth, also called the Sea of Galilee or Tiberias, on the shores of which was situated the renowned city of Capharnaum. A great many people being assembled on the shore of the sea, Jesus entered into a boat, and from it announced his doctrine to the multitude in parables. It was evening when he ceased preaching, and he commanded his disciples to take him across the sea, for he wished to go to the opposite side to pray in solitude. Whilst they were crossing the sea a great storm arose; his disciples in their anguish hastened to Jesus, who was sleeping in the stern of the ship, and awaked him, exclaiming: *Lord, save us, we perish.* Jesus, rising, commanded the waves, and there was a great calm. We shall make the symboli-

cal signification of this occurence the subject of our meditation this morning.

The boat on the Lake of Genesareth a symbol of the Catholic Church.

PART I.

1. Like other vessels, the boat on the Lake of Genesareth was narrow at the prow, broad in the centre, and somewhat narrow at the stern. In its construction the boat is a symbol of the Church. When we contemplate the Church established by Christ we find that just as the boat is very small at the prow, where it first begins to cleave the water, so the Church had a very small beginning. Even after the departure of her divine Founder or Builder, she had room enough in the *cœnaculum*, or upper room at Jerusalem, the number of the faithful in all being only one hundred and twenty souls. This certainly was a small congregation, especially when we consider that Christ had labored incessantly for three years, preaching and performing numberless miracles. But Christ wished to prepare the field, sow the seed, and let his disciples reap the harvest.—*John* 4: 37, 38. God's works usually have a small and modest beginning. Let us base all our undertakings on humility, that God may bless them.

2. The boat extends and widens towards the centre. In like manner, the Church quickly began to grow and to develop its magnificent dimensions, to the astonishment and admiration of mankind. Even during the time of the Apostles the Church numbered many adherents, not only in the land of the Jews, but also in most provinces of the Roman Empire. In the middle of the third century we find Christianity planted and taking root not only in Asia and Africa, but also in Europe, and most of the nations were, if not entirely, at least in great part, Christian. Tertullian says: "We Christians are only of yesterday, yet we fill every place—your cities, your towns, your villages, the palace, the senate, the legislative halls; we leave you nothing but your temples." After Constantine the Great became a Christian, Paganism disappeared from the whole Roman Empire, and Christianity became the prevailing religion. To-day the Catholic Church numbers two hundred and fifty millions of souls. Amid all the changes of time and circumstances the bark of Peter still ploughs her way bravely on. She holds the self-same course that she did when Peter handled the helm. She swerves neither to the right nor to the left. Could one of the early Roman martyrs reappear again upon the scene, he would find all changed,—the Cæsars gone, the palace, and the villa, and the arena gone, the

outward aspect of the Church itself completely altered, Peter's instead of the Catacombs,—but the ship is the self-same, her course the same and the storms which buffet her only in form and manner different from what they were under the Cæsars. But where there were thousands aboard of her then, there are millions now. She is large enough to receive still more. She was built to accomodate all the nations of the earth.

3. As the boat begins gradually to narrow again towards the stern, but not nearly so much as at the prow, so the Church will exhibit these symmetrical dimensions. Before the end of the world Antichrist will come, "whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders," and will attempt the downfall and destruction of the Church.—*II. Thess.* 2: 3 *et seq.* Temptations will be so great, that, if it were possible, even the elect would be led into error. Apostasy from Christianity will be general. Therefore Christ says: "The Son of Man when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?"—*Luke* 18: 8. It is true, the Catholic Church will exist to the end of the world; there will, however, be a great falling-off in numbers. At the sight of a boat or ship remember these truths, and return thanks to God for your vocation to the Catholic Church, and resolve always to continue faithful to your God and to his holy Church.

Part II.

Christ and his disciples were in the boat on tho Lake of Genesareth.

1. *Jesus Christ is in the Church*, and will be in her to the end of time. He promises this himself: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Matt.* 28: 20. And for what purpose? In order to protect her against all her enemies and to preserve her. This is our consolation. He dwells in the Church not only as God, but also as man; he is, faith teaches us, truly present in the Blessed Eucharist with his Divinity and humanity. What a grace for us, which so many Catholics know not how to appreciate! They do not visit him in his tabernacles, they do not receive him in holy communion.

2. *The disciples of Christ are in the Church*—the Pope, bishops, and priests. They are lawful successors of the Apostles and disciples of Christ, and have the same power and authority. Peter continues to live in the person of the Pope; the other Apostles, in the bishops united with the Pope; and the disciples, in the priests. No other religious denomination has pastors who are

the lawful successors of the Apostles, and who are in union with Peter; therefore theirs is not the ship or Church of Christ; consequently one can not work out one's salvation in any other than the Church of Christ. Let us rejoice that we have always been Catholics; that in our infancy we were baptized as members of the Catholic Church, and let us thank God that we have never known what it is to be severed from its membership. In her we have the only true and saving faith, and all the means of salvation. Let us show ourselves worthy of this grace, and employ it to our advantage.

PART III.

The boat was overtaken by a storm. The gospel says: *A great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves.* The Church is also exposed to storms. They are—

1. External storms, that is, persecutions, which come from without. How cruelly have many Roman Emperors, Nero, Domitian, Maximin, Diocletian, and Julian, persecuted the Church! Who can describe the sufferings which the Christians of the first three centuries endured for their faith! Rabid dogs were never hunted down so mercilessly as were the innocent Christians. One can not read of these cruel tortures without shuddering. These persecutions have since frequently been repeated, as Church history informs us. We have only to recall to mind the Huns, the Turks, and later, at the time of the French Revolution, the infidels. The blood of Christians which has been shed for the last eighteen hundred years would make a sea larger than the Lake of Genesareth.

2. Internal tempests, that is, persecutions which the Church was compelled to endure from her own wayward, unfaithful children, false teachers and heretics. There has been scarcely a century in which the Church was not obliged to bewail the defection of many of her children. The heresiarchs from the beginning manifested themselves as the most bitter enemies of the Church; they misrepresented her doctrine, and disseminated lies and calumnies against her in order to render her odious; they often succeeded in influencing temporal rulers to become her persecutors and to oppress her in every possible way Proofs from Church history: What did not the Catholics suffer from the Arians, the Iconoclasts, the Albigenses, the Hussites, and the Protestants? The Church felt these sufferings the more, as they came, not from strangers and outsiders, but from her own renegade children. Oh, that there may be none among us who unite with the enemies of the Church in order to dishonor, revile,

calumniate, and injure his mother! "The eye that mocketh at his father and that despiseth the labor of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it."—*Prov.* 30: 17.

Part IV.

He was asleep. The storm rages with unabated fury, wave follows wave, rising higher and higher, and covering the boat; the disciples are in mortal terror, imagining every moment that they will be lost; but Jesus sleeps. At first sight this sleeping of the Master in such perilous circumstances, this seeming indifference to the fishermen's anxiety, seems inexplicable. But he had his own motive. By that sleep, as well as by all else he did and said, he wished to inculcate a lesson which his followers would have need to remember in the ages to come. In the perils and dangers which beset the Church in our day it is a great source of consolation to all faithful Catholics to recall to mind that, with Peter himself at the helm, Jesus slept during that night of storm and darkness, terror and confusion.

1. The history of the Church carries us back to many a period when Jesus slept while his ship, the Church, was struggling with the most violent storms. He seemed, but only seemed, not to care for the fate of his own, and apparently gave them over to the power of their enemies; he saw them oppressed and persecuted, vilified, trodden upon, and outraged in every way, while a hard, heartless, and hostile world took a fiendish delight in witnessing their misery and humiliation. And yet Jesus slept. He let the storm spend its fury. He knew what manner of ship it was he had launched. Let the tempest rage never so fiercely, she was fitted to withstand its might. Let the darkness be black as Egypt's, there was no danger of her missing her course. These storms serve only to nerve all on board to more heroic effort—serve also to turn their thoughts in humble and conscious dependence to him who seemed to sleep, but whom they know to be their safety. Yet as we can not penetrate the designs of Providence, it does surely seem strange in many cases and must continue to seem strange, to our mere human reason, that the Master should go on sleeping and allow the enemies of his Church to gain such seemingly grand and lasting triumphs over her. Examples from history: The Christians during the time of a three hundred year's persecution. The faithful in Spain, when they languished under the yoke of the Moors. The Irish, who, on account of their faith, suffered persecutions for three hundred years. How could Christ sleep, and for so long a time!

2. He seems to sleep again in our day. Scarcely at any period of her history has the Catholic Church had so many, and such wily and deadly foes as she is now called on to encounter. A hostile spirit manifests itself everywhere. In many places she is oppressed and persecuted, her property confiscated, her clergy imprisoned or banished. In the open as in the dark, on the hustings as in the freemasons' lodges, in the bureaus of princes as in the dens of conspirators, her downfall is planned and prophesied, plotted and wrought for. Zealous Catholics, strong in faith, priests and laymen, are making the greatest sacrifices for the Church, and yet Christ sleeps. He gives no help, when it would be so easy for him to do so. Why does he not come to the assistance of his Church? His hour is not yet come. When will it come? When it will conduce to his honor and man's salvation.

PART V.

The disciples go to Jesus, and implore his help, and rising up, he calms the storm.

1. The disciples cried out, full of fear: *Lord, save us, we perish.* So also did the oppressed Christians of all times. The greater the danger and affliction, the more fervently they implored God's aid and intervention. When Peter was in prison, and like his fellow-apostles, was to be executed, the faithful prayed without ceasing for him.—*Acts* 12. St. Augustine says that in the time of persecution, prayers and tears are the weapons which the Christians use against their enemies. We also have recourse to prayer in the present afflictions of the Church. We do what the Apostles did in the tempest: we pray.

2. And what did our Lord do at the prayer of his disciples? *Rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm.* The prayer of the Apostles was not fruitless. It proved an effectual means of obtaining the divine help when effort seemed useless, and other hope there was none. A prayer full of faith and confidence has always a like result. Was it not the persevering prayer of the faithful that moved God to deliver St. Peter from the murderous hands of Herod, and lead him by an angel out of prison? During the time of Pius V., was it not by prayer that our Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, gave the Christians victory over the Turk, the arch-enemy of Christianity? The promise of Christ remains always true: "Amen, amen, I say to you: If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you."—*John* 16: 23. We need not therefore lose courage in the present time of affliction; we have the means at our disposal to obtain of God help and protection for

ourselves and the Church, and this means is prayer. "Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid."—*Hebrews* 4: 16.

PERORATION.

Behold, the boat on the Lake of Genesareth is a symbol of the holy Catholic Church. The boat was to make but a short voyage, and yet she encountered a great tempest. Le tus not be astonished, when storms, that is, tribulations and persecutions, come upon the Church, whose voyage on the ocean of the world will last till the end of time. Let us not become discouraged and pusillanimous when we see such storms rage around: let us be firm in our confidence, for we are taught by the word of God that the Church is built upon a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. But to obtain divine protection and assistance we must pray. Let us therefore make use of this means; let us pray with confidence and perseverance—and Christ, rising up, will command the winds and the storm, and there shall come a great calm. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith.—Matt. 8: 26.

The Apostles had up to this time frequently been witnesses of the wonderful miracles of Jesus; therefore when the tempest raged on the sea they should have held their peace and consoled themselves with the thought: "Christ is with us; no harm can befall us." But, instead of putting their trust in Christ and holding their peace, they experienced the greatest fear, and in their excitement cried out: *Lord, save us, we perish.* Jesus rebuked them for their want of faith, in these words: *Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?* Our conduct is no better, nay, is frequently more blamable than that of the Apostles; for, many a time it needs no severe trial, no great affliction, to make us lose our courage and imagine that all is lost. Why is it we act so?

Because we lack confidence in God. I shall speak to you to-day on the subject of *confidence in God*, describing—

I. Its qualities;
II. Its effects.

PART I.

Confidence in God must be—

1. *Firm.* A Christian must in every circumstance of life, even in the greatest dangers and afflictions, be penetrated with the conviction that God will protect him and ordain everything for his good.

(*a.*) This confidence is based upon *God's power, goodness,* and *wisdom.* God is almighty, therefore there is no necessity in which he can not help us; he is infinitely good, therefore ready to help us in every need; he is infinitely wise, therefore he will dispose and ordain everything that is best and salutary for us.

(*b.*) *Examples of this confidence. Jonathan:* "It is easy for the Lord to save either by many, or by few."—*I. Kings* 14: 6. *David:* "The Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."—*I. Kings* 17: 37. *The woman that was troubled with an issue of blood:* "If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed."—*Matt.* 9: 21.

(*c.*) *Faults against this confidence. Pusillanimity and timidity.* Many become despondent as soon as an affliction comes upon them; they break forth in complaints and will not be comforted, they give up all hope and imagine that there is no help for them. How often these complaints prove to be exaggerated, nay, entirely false! Others, again, in the beginning of their afflictions, are resigned to the will of God, but if the affliction last for any length of time and the means employed for relief produce no effect, they become discouraged and say impatiently: Why must I suffer so long without obtaining any relief? To act thus, or in any way like it, is to offend God, who designs all for the best, and to whose holy will we should always be resigned.

2. *Active.* We must do what is required on our part if we wish to obtain anything from God. The adage is true: "God helps those who help themselves." This is necessary—

(*a.*) *In temporal things.* He who wishes to succeed in the world must learn some trade or profession, labor diligently, and be

economical. He who wishes to reap a good harvest must prepare his field and sow good seed. He who wishes to recover from sickness must make use of the appropriate means for the recovery of health.

(*b.*) *In matters pertaining to the salvation of a soul.* If we wish to be admitted into heaven, we must conscientiously keep the commandments; if we wish to obtain forgiveness of our sins, we must be truly sorry for them and confess them; if we wish to remain in the state of grace, we must watch and pray, etc.

(*c.*) *Faults against this confidence.* In general, all those sin who expect to obtain their request without making use of the appropriate means, hoping that God will, in some extraordinary manner, or by working a miracle in their behalf, procure them the object of their desire.

It would be sinful confidence in a sick man to refuse the physician's medicine and hope to be restored to health by a miracle. It is sinful confidence to expose one's self without necessity to any danger of body or soul, and expect that God, by a special protection, will avert the danger. This is only foolhardiness. It is sinful confidence to expect God to forgive us our sins if we go on sinning, or do not avoid the proximate occasions. If is sinful confidence to expect that God will restore us to his favor and friendship, if we do not restore ill-gotten goods, repair injuries or damages inflicted by us, forgive our enemies, overcome bad habits, attend to our religious duties, and approach the sacraments.

3. *Based upon the merits of Jesus Christ.* We owe everything to the merits of Jesus Christ, particularly—

(*a.*) *The forgiveness of our sins.* He is the Lamb "who taketh away the sin of the world."—*John* 1: 29. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace."—*Ephes.* 1: 7. If Christ had not died for us, no sin could be forgiven us, not even a venial one, even if we bewailed it with tears of blood.

(*b.*) *The grace to do good.* "I am the vine: you the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing."—*John* 15: 5. The grace of resisting temptations, of performing good and meritorious actions, of persevering in good—this grace, as in fact all graces that contribute to the saving of our souls, flows to us from the merits of Christ. If it were not for these merits, no one would receive even the least grace.

(*c.*) *Eternal salvation.* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you."—*I. Peter* 1: 3, 4. In order to be saved it is necessary to avoid evil, to keep the commandments, to perform good and meritorious works, and to persevere in justice to the end,—all things which are impossible without the grace of God. Now, since every grace flows from the merits of Christ, it is evident that we can attain eternal salvation only through the merits of Christ.

(*d.*) *Even temporal goods,* such as food, raiment, shelter, health, prosperity in our undertakings and business transactions. For this reason Christ himself directs us to pray in his name that our heavenly Father may hear us. "If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you."—*John* 16: 23. This is also the reason why the Church concludes all her prayers with these or similar words, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord," for she knows that every good gift is given to us by God, our Father in heaven, only on account of the merits of Jesus Christ, his Son.

The foundation therefore of all our confidence in God is the merits of Jesus Christ. We read in the life of St. Bernard that Satan one day suggested to him the thought: "Bernard, you hope to attain heaven, you miserable creature; where are your merits for so great a joy and glory?" The saint replied to the tempter: "It is true, I am absolutely unworthy of heaven; it is true, I do not, and never shall merit it; nevertheless, I hope for it, because the goodness, love, and mercy of God are infinite; I hope to enjoy the everlasting glory of the heavenly kingdom, because Jesus Christ has merited it for me." We should say the same if the tempter endeavor to weaken our confidence: God is at all times inclined to give us everything good, and even if he do not always grant us what we think we need, we should nevertheless not waver for a moment in our confidence in him, because Jesus Christ has abundantly merited for us all natural and supernatural goods and graces.

PART II.

The effects of confidence in God are most salutary; for—

1. *It delivers us from worldly anxieties and cares.* "The heathens," says Christ, "seek after all these things" (*Matt.* 6: 32), because they have no knowledge of God, and consequently no confidence in him. Christians, on the contrary, who know God and trust in him, live quietly and are comforted, for they know

that he ordains everything for their good; that even what appears to be an evil in the eyes of the world is good and expedient if we only make proper use of it. This thought banishes all tormenting cares from their hearts and makes them always resigned to the will of God. They say with David: "The Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man can do unto me."—*Ps.* 117: 6. How does it happen that so many Christians are always full of cases and troubles, that they torment themselves, and never find rest and peace? It proceeds from want of confidence in God. Frequently make acts of confidence in God, in order to confirm yourselves in this virtue, and you will pass your days in quietude and peace.

2. *It affords comfort in sufferings and persecutions*, so that one bears them, not only with patience, but even with joy; for confidence has its foundation in faith, which teaches us, "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."—*Rom.* 8: 18. For this reason the saints endured with patience and joy whatever painful and difficult things they were obliged to bear. "The Apostles went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."—*Acts* 5: 41. St. Paul acknowledges of himself that he was filled with comfort and exceedingly abounded with joy in all his tribulations.—*II. Cor.* 7: 4. (Examples from the lives of the saints, St. Teresa and St. Lidwina.) Oh, that all Christians would be animated by a true confidence! They would then in all difficulties and sufferings preserve their equanimity, and courageously follow their divine Lord on the way of the cross, in the blessed hope that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him.—*Rom.* 8: 17.

3. *It gives us courage and strength in temptations.* Our life upon earth is a warfare. There are enemies within and without; for the world, the flesh, and the devil, are waging a continual war against us, and using all their endeavors to draw us into sin and hell. What can sustain our courage amidst so many and such great dangers? Confidence in God. This holds us firm and secure in the midst of storms, as the anchor holds the ship. In the certainty of assistance from above we fear no enemy and know no danger; we feel ourselves strong and powerful, and full of confidence we say with David: "Our God is our refuge and strength; a helper in troubles, which have found us exceedingly. Therefore we will not fear when the earth shall be troubled and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea."—*Ps.* 45: 2, 3. St. Francis of Sales suffered great temptations, as he writes in a letter: "I am tempted so violently that the necessary strength for

resistance seems to be wanting to me, and I fear I should fall if an opportunity presented itself." And he adds: "The weaker, however, I feel myself, the more my confidence in God increases; for I am confident that he will give me so great a power that I could devour my enemies like young lambs, even if the object of my sinful desire were present to me." Confidence in God gives us this courage, this strength.

4. *It renders the practice of Christian virtues and good works easy.* He who trusts in God is convinced that he can do all things with the help of God. For this reason he goes about the work of his salvation with alacrity and courage, and surmounts all the obstacles and undergoes all the difficulties which he meets with in the way of virtue. He who trusts in God lives also in the blessed hope that he will receive a great reward in heaven for all the good he does. And again, it is this hope that urges him on "to make sure his calling and election by good works."—*II. Peter* 1: 10. What was it that actuated St. Paul to preach the gospel under so many difficulties, that he became all to all, without asking the least temporal reward? He says himself: "I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be made partaker thereof" (that is, that with the graces which the gospel gives I may obtain in eternity those goods which it bestows).—*I. Cor.* 9: 23. If we were all animated with such a lively confidence in God, we should certainly do everything that is required to gain our eternal salvation and make use of every opportunity for doing good.

PERORATION.

As you perceive, confidence is a virtue as necessary as it is salutary. Confidence in God banishes all disquietude and immoderate cares from the heart, infuses into it courage and consolation in trials and persecutions, strengthens us in temptations, and encourages us to practice virtue and good works. Let us always act as Christians who believe that they are under God's fatherly protection; let us do what reason and religion prescribe in order to make ourselves worthy of the protection and assistance of God, and endeavor to lead a pious life. Then our confidence will be founded on a solid basis, and we may hope for every blessing from God; for "if our hearts do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."—*I. John* 3: 21, 22. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

WHAT WE NEED ON OUR VOYAGE THROUGH LIFE IN ORDER TO REACH THE PORT OF ETERNITY IN SAFETY.

His disciples came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish.—Matt. 8: 25.

As the gospel of this day informs us, the Apostles in the passage across the Galilean Sea were exposed to a great storm; they were in danger of being shipwrecked and of finding a watery grave. In great fear they came to Jesus, and awaked him, exclaiming: *Lord, save us, we perish.* Our life upon earth is like a voyage on sea, where storms arise and threaten to wreck us. These storms are temptations, from which we shall never be free as long as we live. Mariners at sea need three things particularly, any of which being wanting, navigation would be extremely dangerous, if not quite impossible. These are a rudder, a compass, and an anchor. On our life's voyage we also need, figuratively speaking, a rudder, a compass, and an anchor, if we desire to steer our course correctly, and make the haven of a happy eternity. We need—

I. The helm of the cross;
II. The compass of conscience;
III. The anchor of hope.

Part I.

The helm or rudder is absolutely necessary in navigation. It is only by its means that the vessel can be kept on her course. A good and well-poised vessel obeys its every motion. The helm is not the power which gives motion to the ship but it is by its means that the direction in which the impelling power shall act is determined. Without it a vessel would be like a tub in the sea, driven hither and thither, and tossed about at the mercy of winds and waves and currents. There would be no means of keeping her off shoals or preventing her from being dashed to pieces on the rocks. Now our helm is the cross. We need it—

1. *In the tribulations of this life.* The earth since the fall of our first parents is no longer a paradise, but a valley of tears; sufferings and afflictions of every description are the lot of the children of Adam. What can raise and strengthen us? The cross. We need only represent to ourselves our patient Redeemer carrying the cross. He never had a peaceful hour in his whole life; tribulations of every kind were his portion on earth. Do wo deserve anything better than he? Do we not know that if we wish to be his disciples we must follow him on the way of the cross: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—*Matt.* 16: 24.

2. *In persecution.* "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."—*II. Tim.* 3: 12. History and experience corroborate this sentence. What sufferings did not the Apostles and the Christians of the first three centuries endure? He who clings to his faith as a good Catholic and lives in accordance with its precepts is frequently reviled, caluminated, mocked, and insulted. This is especially the case in our days. What can and must comfort us in such persecutions? The cross. Christ was also persecuted even to his last moments on the cross. How did he act towards his persecutors? Did he curse them? Did he take revenge on them? No, he was all love towards them and prayed for them on the cross. Should not the example of Jesus dispose us to reconciliation, and urge us to do what he commands. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you."—*Luke* 6: 27, 28. Example: St. John Gualbert (12 July).

3. *In sickness and pain.* All men are more or less subject to these evils. Some are sickly and remain so through life. Others enjoy good health for a number of years; then they are stricken down with sickness, and suffer through weary days, perhaps months. In such cases we need fortitude, that we may not lose patience nor become despondent, much less murmur against God. This fortitude we derive from the cross. Who can describe the pains which Jesus suffered for the love of us, the sorrows of his soul in the Garden of Olives, where he shed that bloody sweat of anguish—the pains of his body during the different stages of his passion? How little is what we are obliged to suffer in comparison with the sufferings of Christ? Should we become impatient—we who are sinners and deserve hell?

4. *In sins.* How wretched is man in sin! Deprived of the image of God and of sanctifying grace, he is in continual danger of falling a prey to eternal death. Sin is an abomination in the eyes of the infinitely holy God, and he punishes it according to

his justice with eternal death. What must be the feelings of a sinner when he considers this? Must he not be filled with anguish and terror? But even for him there is comfort in the cross. Christ died on the cross for us sinners: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace."—*Ephes.* 1: 7. "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound."—*Rom.* 5: 20. No sinner, not even the greatest, need despair. If, with the penitent thief on the cross, he have recourse to his crucified Saviour with a contrite and humble heart, he will find mercy and pardon.

5. *Finally, in the agony of death.* In the hour of death the evil spirit will attack us with redoubled fury, knowing that he has but a short time; but the cross frustrates all his attacks and puts him to flight. The holy martyr Ignatius says: "The cross is a sign of victory against the power of the prince of this world; when he sees it, he is terrified; when he hears of it, he is afraid." In our dying hour spiritual and corporal evils are awaiting us, such as fear, anguish, pain, disquietude. But the cross raises our drooping spirits, comforts us, and infuses courage into our hearts when afflictions crowd upon us. It reminds us of the cruel death of our divine Redeemer, who died on the cross for our salvation, who suffered death that we may have eternal life with him in the kingdom of his glory. "Before the cross was," says St. Augustine, "there was no ladder to heaven; therefore neither Abraham, nor Jacob nor David, nor any other man could get there. But since the cross has been erected the entrance into heaven is open."

Part II.

Mariners need a compass in navigation. This is a small circular box containing a magnetic needle, balanced horizontally on a pivot, which always points to the North Pole. The circular, graduated scale contains the thirty-two points of the heavens, and is enclosed in an instrument called the binnacle, which is placed just a little in advance of the helm, so that the man at the wheel may know how to steer in order to keep the ship on her right course, and thus arrive at the place of destination. The helmsman keeps his eye steadily on the compass, especially when the sea is rough. Now, in the voyage of this life, on the ocean of time, our compass is our conscience, placed in the circular box of the heart, and all enclosed in the binnacle of the breast; if we watch it, we can never go astray.

1. Not unlike the compass, *conscience tells us, not only in general, but even in every particular case, what is right and what is wrong.* As soon as we are about to do anything, conscience, the magnetic

needle in our bosom, becomes active, veers in tremulous delicacy, and points directly to the polar star of the will of God and to the cardinal points of his commandments. We can not mistake it. He that obeys his conscience will always do right, for conscience is the voice of God, which registers every action as right or wrong. It is true, that in the mariner's compass there is sometimes found a slight variation of the needle from the North; a veriation is greater in some latitudes than in others. In like manner it is possible for conscience to become erroneous. It may hold something to be right which is really wrong and sinful, or it may declare that to be wrong or sinful which in truth is not. I must here remark that one must not act against the dictates even of an erroneous conscience; but if one be in doubt whether what one is about to do or to omit is lawful or not, one must not act at all, but must seek information from pious and prudent Christians, or better still, in the confessional, where one's conscience will be set right.

2. Conscience not only makes known to us the will of God, but also *urges us to do it*. If there be a question about the performance of some good work, for instance, about interior or exterior mortification, a devotion or a work of charity, it exhorts us to do it, and cries out to us: Do it; it is pleasing to God, it merits for you a reward in heaven. But if we be tempted to some wicked deed, for instance, to hatred, enmity, slander, or impurity, conscience is aroused at once, resists our sinful design with all earnestness, and points out the evil consequences which sin draws after it for time and eternity. For this reason St. Chrysostom calls conscience the secret teacher that gives us good lessons, makes salutary expostulations, encourages our minds, and urges us on to do what is right. Conscience acts in a way the very reverse of that followed by the innate evil concupiscence: as the latter endeavors to keep us from what is good, and to draw us to evil, so the former strives to induce us to avoid evil and to do good. Oh, that we would never follow the impulses of concupiscence, but always the voice of our conscience!

3. Conscience displays its activity not only before, but also *after our actions*, whether they be good or bad. If we have done a good action, it praises and applauds us, saying: You have done well; God is pleased with you, and you may expect a reward from him; then we rejoice and are comforted. But if we have done evil, conscience reproaches us and excites within us displeasure, disquietude, fear, and other painful feelings. Conscience, says St. Basil, is a secret tribunal, where what is good is defended, and what is wrong is revenged and punished. The sinner may do what he will, he may divert and distract himself, may endeavor violently to suppress harassing thoughts and enjoy every pleasure, but all to no avail; he cannot silence his

conscience; it reproaches him again and again, places his injustice before his eyes, and gnaws like a worm at his heart. Witness Adam and Eve.—*Gen.* 3 : 8. Cain.—*Gen.* 4 : 13. Antiochus. —*I. Mach.* 6 : 8. Judas.—*Matt.* 27 : 3-5. These reproaches of conscience are a great grace to the sinner; for by them God designs to make him disgusted with his sins and to compel him, as it were, to do penance.

PART III.

Mariners need an anchor also, which they cast in shallow places during a storm or in other cases of necessity, to prevent the ship from striking against breakers or sandbanks, and also for holding the ship at rest. Our anchor is hope, which we need very often on our voyage upon the boisterous ocean of life. I shall mention only a few cases.

1. *Many persons are poor and needy.* Their life upon earth is a series of privations, and they have no prospect of ever bettering their condition. What can make such Christians patient and resigned in their miserable situation? Christian hope. Christ does not call the rich blessed, but the poor; he himself chose poverty for his portion. All his disciples and followers were either really poor, or at least poor in spirit. Dives was buried in hell: Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom. Every poor man can say to himself: If I bear my poverty, and the hardships connected with it, in patience, in the spirit of penance, and for the love of God, Christ's promise will be realized in me: "I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and may sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."—*Luke* 22 : 29, 30. Who would not cheerfully be poor for such a reward?

2. *Many must work hard in order to get a bare living.* They must go to their work before daylight, and night often finds them still at their labor. They work from one year's end to another without interruption, till old age, sickness, or death puts a stop to their toil. It is enough to make such poor people lose all courage and patience. It certainly is, if this life were everything. But hope points to the life to come, where those who labor patiently and with a good intention will enjoy sweet rest throughout all eternity; and it is this hope that makes them labor cheerfully, and bear their burden with resignation as long as they live and have the nessary strength.

3. It frequently happens that *all the labor and pains that are spent on the temporal and eternal welfare of inferiors and fellowmen remain fruitless.* What do not good, zealous parents, teachers, and priests do in order to make their children and those

intrusted to their charge happy for time and eternity? How much do they not teach, admonish, exhort, entreat, rebuke, reprove, and punish, how much trouble and pains do they not take early and late? But alas! many must confess with the Apostles: "We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing."—*Luke* 5: 5. All their labor and pains are in vain. What can keep up their courage under such bitter trials, and enable them to continue the work of their vocation? *Hope alone.* Taught by their faith, they know that we serve a God who regards not so much the work as the will. If we do our duty as well as we can, God is satisfied with us, and he will reward our endeavor, whether it be crowned with the desired success or not. Thus, it is hope that urges us on and prevents us growing weary in well-doing; hope that lightens our burden and encourages us to persevere; hope, that cheers and sustains us under difficulties and trials, and enables us, in spite of many disheartening things, to go on bravely and steadily from day to day in the performance of the irksome duties belonging to our state of life.

4. The same may be said of *the service of God.* To serve God has its difficulties; we must continually mortify ourselves, renounce many pleasures and enjoyments, die to the world, and overcome, first this, then that, temptation. And we must do all these things, not only for one or two years, nor even for a few years with a definite term in view, as Jacob had when he served for Rachel, but all the days of our life, till we draw our last breath. Should we be discouraged? No; the goods which we hope for hereafter are unspeakably great, and will last for ever, whilst the service of God here below demands but moderate sacrifices and extends only to this life. Therefore, the Apostle says: "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II. Cor.* 4: 17. Should not the hope of possessing this glory encourage us to bear with constancy the difficulties of the service of God?

PERORATION.

These therefore are the three things which we need on our voyage through life: the *helm of the cross,* the *compass of conscience* and the *anchor of hope.* Blessed are we if we always make the right use of these three instruments; we shall then resist the enemies of our soul, the world, the flesh, and the devil, which are ever waging a fierce war against us for our destruction. Let us keep our eyes on the compass, hold firm to the helm of the cross, and we shall reach the port of heaven in safety, and there drop anchor for all eternity. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Epistle. *Coloss.* 3: 12-17. Brethren: Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another: even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also. But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection: and let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God. All whatsoever you do in word or in work all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

CHARITY THE BOND OF PERFECTION.

The lesson for this day is taken from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians. Colossa was a city of Phrygia, in Asia Minor. Epaphras, probably a disciple of St. Paul who had preached the gospel in Colossa, came to Rome to see him when he was in prison and reported to him the false teachers who, by their Jewish and pagan doctrines, had caused much confusion in the Christian congregation at Colossa. St. Paul wrote a letter to the Colossians, in which he warns them agains false teachers, and exhorts them to hold to Epaphras, who was preaching the gospel to them, and to conform their life to the gospel.

In the lesson for this day St. Paul treats of charity, the bond of perfection, that is, the summary of all virtues, and shows how charity manifests itself—

I. Towards men;
II. Towards God.

PART I.

1. *Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience.* Charity, therefore, manifests itself—

(*a.*) *By mercy.* Ho who truly loves his neighbor has compassion on him when he sees him in misery or need. Thus our Lord had compassion on the hungry multitude: "I have compassion on the multitude."—*Mark* 8: 2. So also the Samaritan on the man who was lying by the roadside half-dead.—*Luke* 10: 33, *et seq.* He who can behold the wretchedness, poverty, and need of his neighbor without compassion, must have a heart of stone. What will be the lot of the unmerciful? "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy."—*James* 2: 13. How does Dives fare in the other world, who allowed poor Lazarus to lie at his gate without helping him?—*Luke* 16: 20, *et seq.*

(*b.*) *By benignity.* Charity manifests itself interiorly by compassion and exteriorly by benignity in words and actions, by listening to the complaints of others, and by speedy assistance. If you deport yourself in a cold, haughty manner towards others, and listen impatiently to their complaints, speak with them in an unfriendly manner, refuse their petitions when you could easily grant them, you are destitute of benignity, and consequently of charity. In order not to make ourselves guilty of such uncharitableness towards our fellow-men, let us take to heart the words of the Holy Ghost: "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard" (*Prov.* 21: 13); and the sentence which on the last day will be passed on the unmerciful.—*Matt.* 25: 41, *et seq.*

(*c.*) *By humility.* The charitable man is benevolent and considerate; he esteems his neighbors and is deferential to them according to their respective stations in life; he looks down on no one, no matter how humble, covets no dignities, nor quarrels about precedence. Always gentle and yielding, he is quite content to see others take the first place. The proud are ever devoid of charity. They are consequently unaccomodating, treat others brusquely, if not offensively, and to high and low, to equals, superiors, and inferiors, always contrive to make themselves disagreeable. It is sad to hear such people often attributing to some inherited characteristic, such as temper, and the like, what is simply their own wickedness, the manifestation of the pride of their undisciplined spirit. They had better try and learn of Jesus to be "meek and humble of heart." They had better think more

of the sins of their life, and make more frequent acts of contrition. They had better put to a good use the occasions for humbling themselves which God will put in their way for their correction. In a word, they had better hearken to this day's epistle: *Put ye on, as the elect of God, the bowels of mercy, benignity, and humility*, and give over the aforesaid nonsensical palliation of their sins, viz., ascribing them to involuntary outbursts of a temper, with which, they would have us believe, they were cursed from their mother's womb. It is no such thing. If there be outbursts then there are sins; that is the plain fact. These outbursts only indicate that your sins of pride and passion did not begin today or yesterday. They betoken a habit, a habit acquired by the obdurate sinning of years. The remedy is suggested by St. Paul. Humble yourselves, and *put ye on the bowels of mercy, benignity, and humility*, and, by so doing, you can still overcome the inveterate habit, and become worthy to be named among the elect of God.

(*d.*) *By modesty and patience.* If we love any one sincerely, we are gentle with him; we do not misinterpret what he says or does; we let no hostile, revengeful thoughts arise in us, nor do we use any harsh words; no sarcastic expressions ever escape us, and we are very cautious against doing him any evil or injury. We also have patience and indulgence with regard to his faults and weaknesses, being aware that there are many things in us which displease others. Witness the meekness of David towards Saul; the patience of Christ with his disciples. This sign of fraternal love is wanting in many Christians: "Walk with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity."—*Ephes.* 4: 2.

2. *Charity manifests itself towards our neighbor by reconciliation and love of peace.*

(*a.*) "Bear with one another and forgive one another, if any have a complaint against another." According to the commandment of Christ, charity extends to enemies and offenders: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."—*Matt.* 5: 44. We are bound to be reconciled with our enemies and to forgive them from our heart, and behave towards them in the same manner as towards those who never offended us. The mercy God shows towards us should incite us to mercy. "As the Father hath forgiven you, so do you also." As God has forgiven us many and grievous sins, so we must also forgive our fellow-men their small offenses. Indeed, every offense which is offered to us is small in comparison to the sins by which we offend God. (Parable of the unmerciful

servant who owed his lord ten thousand talents.) Take to heart the words of Christ: "If you will forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offenses; but if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses."—*Matt.* 6: 14, 15.

(*b.*) *And let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body.* Where there is charity there is peace, and charity fears nothing more than the disturbance of peace. A Christian who loves his neighbor sincerely, carefully avoids giving him any occasion for a quarrel; he is prudent in his language, because he knows that by inconsiderate talk peace is frequently disturbed; he bears with his neighbor's faults, and for the sake of peace puts up in silence with much annoyance. He studies peace, he is ever on the watch for little opportunities of cementing the bond of peace by a cordial greeting, a kind word of the absent, or a friendly act to a neighbor. If through no fault of his dissension do arise, he puts a stop to it as soon as possible, and makes the first step towards reconciliation. Abraham's love of peace.—*Gen.* 13: 1, *et seq.* We should be encouraged to the love of peace by the thought that we are all members of one body, the Church, and are destined for the one household, heaven, where, as children of God, we shall live together in eternal peace. Why should those contend and quarrel who hope to love and live with one another for ever in heaven?

PART II.

We manifest love towards God *by being grateful, by highly esteeming and loving his word, by praising him, and by inducing others to do the same, and lastly, by doing all things for his honor.*

1. *Be ye thankful.* Christians who love God are thankful to him for the numberless benefits which they receive from him for time and eternity. This thankfulness consists in—

(*a.*) *Acknowledging the benefits of God.* We must be penetrated with the conviction that everything good we have, natural as well as supernatural, is a gift, an *unmerited* gift of God. "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."—*James* 1: 17. "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"—*I. Cor.* 4: 7. He who ascribes anything to himself and assumes the honor thereof, sins not only against humility, but also against gratitude to God. (The Pharisee in the temple.—*Luke* 18: 11, *et seq.*

(*b.*) *Praising God.* "Give glory to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."—*Ps.* 105: 1. (The three young men in the fiery furnace at Babylon.—*Dan.* 3: 25, *et seq.*) It is great ingratitude to neglect saying our morning and evening prayers.

(*c.*) *Making a good use of the benefits of God.* Man himself requires that the benefits he confers be received with thankfulness, and be put to a good use. To do otherwise, to make light of favors, or throw them aside neglected and unused were to offend him. The same may be said of God. We must employ the gifts he bestows upon us for his honor, and for our own and our neighbor's good. He who uses his health, corporal beauty, or temporal good, for sin and vice, is guilty of ingratitude. These gifts were bestowed on him by God to be put to a good use. In like manner, by disregarding good advice and wholesome admonitions, by desecrating Sundays and holidays, by receiving the sacraments unworthily, the sinner renders himself guilty of the blackest ingratitude. And how common is this ingratitude!

2. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom.* If we love God, the word of Christ dwells in us; that is, we love and appreciate the word of God, we love to hear it, meditate on it, and regulate our life according to it. Therefore, our divine Saviour says: "If any one love me, he will keep my word."—*John* 14: 23. In this manner all pious souls have manifested their love of God. Examples: The Blessed Virgin, of whom we read: "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart."—*Luke* 2: 19. Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night in order to hear the word of God from him.—*John* 3: 2, *et seq.* Mary Magdalene, who, sitting at the Saviour's feet, heard his word.—*Luke* 10: 39. How is it with you in regard to the word of God? Do you love to read spiritual books? Do you listen to sermons? And do you practice what you hear in them?

3. *All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.* He who truly loves God, does all things in his name; that is, he refers all his actions to God, does them for the love and honor of God. As God created heaven and earth, so also he created man for his honor; it is our vocation to glorify him in time and eternity. From this it follows that whatsoever we do, we should do it not for our sake, but for God's sake, with the intention of fulfilling the will of God, and to show him our respect, obedience, and love. This is the so-called *good intention,* which must be the basis of all our good actions, if we wish them to be pleasing to God and meritorious for heaven. St. Francis of Sales says: "He who intends to

perform his actions well must do them with a pure intention and with the firm, resolute, cheerful will to please God alone. This is the beauty and the soul of our actions." St. Arsenius says: "He who does good works to please men, resembles a man who continually draws water, but pours it into a sieve." Be careful, then, that in all your actions the good intention be not wanting; make a good resolution every morning, and renew it several times during the day, saying: "All for the greater glory of God."

PERORATION.

You have heard now how your love of God and of your neighbor is to manifest itself. Be merciful and charitable to the poor. Be benevolent, meek, humble, and patient; forgive your adversaries, and live as much as possible in peace with all men. Be thankful to God for his numberless graces and benefits, appreciate and love his holy word; and whatsoever you do, do it for his greater honor and glory. If you truly love God and your neighbor, you fulfil the whole law and will obtain eternal life. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* 13: 24-30. At that time: Jesus spoke this parable to the multitudes, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the good man of the house coming said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence, then, hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said: No, lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn; but the wheat gather ye into my barn.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE COCKLE.

The parable of the wheat and the cockle is one of those similitudes which Christ delivered from the boat to the multitude who were assembled on the shores of Lake Genesareth. He also gave the explanation of this parable. He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, the cockle are the children of the wicked one; and the enemy that sowed them is the devil; but the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels, who shall gather the cockle, to wit, the wicked, and cast them into the furnace of fire, while the good they shall conduct into heaven.—*Matt.* 13: 37-43.

According to this explanation given by our divine Saviour, we shall consider more minutely the parable of the wheat and the cockle:

I. In the sowing;
II. In the growth;
III. In the harvesting.

PART I.

1. *The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field.*

(*a.*) He that sowed the good seed is Christ. Our Saviour can in truth call himself the Son of Man, because he is not only God, but also man; that is, he has a human body and a human soul, a human will and a human heart, with all its human affections, and yet he was not a human person. He is not a man made God, but a God made man, having two natures and two wills, but only one person, the Person of the Son of God. He had a human soul and was like all other men, save only in two things—namely, *sin and human personality*. In the eternal councils of the Blessed Trinity he proposed, so to speak, to redeem poor, fallen man. It is true, man had fallen through disobedience, but, after all, it was partly through deception—the devil was the chief cause of the evil. This proposition of the Second Divine Person pleased the Eternal Father. But how could it be accomplished? Being God, he could neither suffer nor die, and man was doomed to die;

then it was that he proposed to become man, to assume human nature in all its completeness, to become like unto us in everything, sin alone excepted. He humbled himself and exalted our human nature to the very throne of the Deity, and thus defeated the designs of Satan. Let language cease to attempt adequately to express the great honor we have hereby received. How much ought we not to guard against everything that might defile our human nature, our body and our soul!

(*b.*) *The good seed* are the children of the kingdom; that is, the just of all times. Christ sowed good seed in the very beginning of the world, for he, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, created the first man holy and just. After mankind sinned, he redeemed them by purifying and sanctifying them. This Redemption is, as it were, a second creation; wherefore the Apostle calls the Christian a creation of God, created in Christ for good works.—*Ephes.* 2: 10. For this second creation, that is, for the Redemption, we must be thankful to our divine Saviour, and indeed more thankful than for the first, for while he performed the first only by his word, the second cost him the last drop of blood, his life. Oh! that we would reflect well on this, and after having lost the grace of our first creation, take care to preserve that of the second.

(*c.*) *The field* is the world, the whole human family, for it is his will that all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. For this purpose he established the holy Catholic Church, wherein the word of God is preached, which tells us what we must believe and do in order to please God. In this Church Jesus Christ offers himself daily by the hands of his priests, in an unbloody manner, in order to apply to our souls the fruits of his bloody sacrifice on the cross; in her we have the holy sacraments, by which we are justified and become children of God and heirs of heaven. Let us continually thank God for the grace of our vocation to the Catholic Church and make good use of her means of salvation.

2. *But while men were asleep, his enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way.*

(*a.*) The enemy that oversowed cockle among the wheat is the devil, as Christ expressly says. There are devils and evil spirits; to deny it would be to falsify the word of Christ. Satan sowed cockle in the garden of Eden by seducing Eve, and will continue to sow the seed of sin until the end of time. After first introducing evil into the world, he employs concupiscence and vicious persons as confederates in order to destroy a greater number of souls.

(*b.*) *While men were asleep* the devil sowed cockle. While superiors, fathers and mothers, and all men in general, sleep, that is, while they do not watch over their children and inferiors, and over themselves, the devil has the best opportunity of sowing cockle. When young people know that they are not watched, they use the opportunity for dissipations of every kind. The external senses and inordinate inclinations likewise lead to many sins and vices if they are not watched and bridled. We must, therefore, not sleep, but watch. "Be sober, and watch, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour."—*I. Pet.* 5: 8.

(*c.*) The cockle with which the enemy oversowed the wheat are *the children of the wicked one*, that is, those who give scandal and do wrong. These are the heresiarchs particularly, according to the Fathers of the Church, and in general, all the wicked, who, by false doctrines and a sinful life, give scandal and drag others with them to perdition. Heretics and false teachers are the devil's weeds, because, like him, they seduce men by lies; wherefore St. Polycarp replied to Marcian, the heretic, whom he met in Rome, and who asked him if he knew him: "I know you; you are the first-born of the devil." Vicious persons and those who give scandal and seduce others are no better. Guard against them and do not associate with them. "Pitch defileth."

PART II.

1. *When the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle.*

(*a.*) As the wheat sprung up first and brought forth fruit, so the holy Catholic Church was first in the field; and it was only later that other religious societies were formed. All these later religious societies bear in themselves, on account of their later origin, the sign and marks of falsehood; they are human or infernal, not divine, institutions; they are not wheat, but cockle.

(*b.*) The cockle which is here spoken of, is called in Latin *zizania*, a weed, which, when it springs up, looks very much like wheat, but later, when it has attained its growth, and the wheat begins to shoot forth its ears, can easily be distinguished from the real wheat. Thus false teachers and seducers know how to dissemble and to disguise their wolfish nature under the appearance of sheep. They affect religion, virtue, benevolence, and charity, in order to gain confidence, but by-and-by, when they have obtained a foothold, they reveal themselves in their true light. Great prudence and circumspection are necessary in

order not to fall a victim to such wicked men. He who holds firmly to the Catholic Church and follows the guidance of her priests, he who fears God and recommends himself daily to him in fervent prayer, will be protected.

2. *And the servants of the good man of the house coming said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this.* God created man in a state of grace; our first parents, as they came forth from the hand of their Creator, were holy and just; they were images of God. The originator of sin is the devil.—*John* 8: 44. He can not, however, compel any one to sin; he can only entice and allure; with the grace of God, which is never wanting to us, if we only earnestly petition for it, we can resist all temptations. "Resist the devil and he will fly from you."—*James* 4: 7.

3. *And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up; And he said: No, lest perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it.* Good, zealous Christians sometimes become indignant when they see the wicked triumph, see them trample right and justice under their feet, oppress the good, and glory both in their villany and success. They can hardly help wishing that God would put a stop to the pernicious influence of such men. But God's ways are not our ways; we must moderate our zeal and leave it to God to do what he will, for he knows best what is for his honor, and what is good and salutary for men. The master of the house gives us a reason why his servants should not gather up the cockle, *lest perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it.* Hence for the sake of the wheat, the cockle shall not be rooted up; on account of the good, the wicked shall not at once be destroyed. That many a sinner becomes old in his sinful life, is due to the good and pious; God spares him for their sake. The roots of the cockle are frequently intermingled with those of the wheat, so that you can not root up one without at the same time rooting up the other. Thus the good and the wicked upon earth are so intimately united by various circumstances and relations, that if the wicked were punished immediately, the good would also suffer. For instance, a man without religion is nevertheless necessary for the support of his wife and children. In general, the good would lose a great deal by the wicked being taken from amongst them. They would have no opportunity of practicing many of the Christian virtues, such as meekness, patience, the love of enemies, and thereby they would lose much merit. Without the wicked we should have no martyrs, and the Church would be deprived of her greatest ornaments. Moreover, the

longanimity and mercy of God require that he have patience with sinners, for it is just this indulgence that often leads them to repentance and saves them from perdition. The penitent thief on the cross, Mary Magdalene, St. Paul, St. Augustine, etc.

Part III.

Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn; but the wheat gather ye into my barn.

1. The harvest here spoken of is the general judgment at the end of the world. In the East, the wheat is separated from the cockle in the field, the cockle is burnt at once, and the wheat taken to the barn. On account of this custom the last judgment is compared to the harvest. As the wheat and the cockle grow together until the harvest, so the good and the wicked will be together till the general judgment. If this judgment should take place to-day, to which class should we belong?—to the good, or to the bad? A very important question this, one worthy of every serious man's earnest consideration. As we should be forced to answer, were it actually put to us before the judgment-seat of God to-day, so in all likelihood we shall have to answer it at the general judgment. Men die as they live. Live in sin, die in sin.

2. *The reapers are the angels.* In the Sacred Scriptures the angels frequently appear as the executors of the decrees of God, and such they will be at the last judgment. "And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of the heavens, to the utmost bounds of them."—*Matt.* 24: 31. Make these holy angels your friends by following their inspirations, that you may not tremble before them on the day of judgment.

3. *The cockle shall be bound in bundles.* St. Gregory the Great says: "The angels will bind the cockle in bundles, by delivering to like torments those who are like one another in crime, so that the proud may suffer punishment with the proud, the impure with the impure, the drunkard with drunkards, the adulterer with adulterers." Persecutors of the Church, thieves, impure persons, and many other sinners, now unite and assist one another for the gratification of their passions, for the commission of sin, and vices; with what eyes will they look upon one another on the day of judgment, when they are brought together by the angels to hear their final doom! Oh, how they will curse one another in the abyss of hell, where they must remain together for ever! O Christian, tear yourself from the wicked, that on the

day of judgment you may not be united and condemned with them.

4. *What is the end?*

(*a.*) *The cockle is gathered to be burned.* The fire of hell will be the punishment of the damned. "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels."—*Matt.* 25: 41. In this fire there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth; weeping on account of the eternal torments of hell, gnashing of teeth on account of the rage and despair of the damned. "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—*Is.* 33: 14.

(*b.*) *The wheat is gathered into the barn.* "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."—*Matt.* 25: 34. Heaven, with its ineffable felicity, will be the reward of the faithful servants of God. They will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and enjoy such great pleasures that, full of rapture, they will again and again exclaim with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here."—*Matt.* 17: 4.

PERORATION.

Reflect on the important truths which Jesus Christ proposes for our consideration in the parable of the gospel of to-day. Be not cockle in the field of your heavenly Master, which is the Church; endeavor to remain good wheat, to preserve the faith and live piously; that on the day of judgment the angels may gather you into the barn of eternal life. **Amen.**

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE SANCTITY OF THE CHURCH.

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field.—Matt. 13 : 24.

As Christ himself declares, by the children of the kingdom are to be understood the good seed which a man, that is, himself, the Son of Man, sowed in his field. The kingdom of Christ is the Church which he established; the children of the kingdom therefore are the members of his Church. But besides the one Church of Christ there is a multitude of religious societies in the world, each of which claims to be the true Church of Christ. Which of these religious societies can assert with truth that it is the true Church? Which is really the Church established by Christ? I answer: only that one which has the marks of the true Church. About the first of these marks, namely, the unity of the Church, I spoke to you last Sunday. To-day I shall speak about the second, viz., *the Sanctity* of the Church, and show you,

I. That the Church of Christ must be holy;
II. That the Catholic Church is really holy;
III. That all other religious denominations are destitute of holiness; from which it necessarily follows that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church established by Christ.

PART I.

The true Church must be holy—

1. *In her Founder.* She must have a founder, who by the sanctity of his life and by miracles proves himself to be sent by God, for otherwise God could not require us to believe him in matters pertaining to eternal salvation. If therefore men who lead wicked, sinful, and dissipated lives, set themselves up as the founders of creeds or as the reformers of the true faith, it is a sure sign that they are false teachers, and religious denominations that have such men for their founders evidently can not be the Church of Christ. But because holiness is not of itself an infallible sign of a divine mission—because, as we all know, no man can abso-

lutely pronounce as to the holiness of another, no man being able to look into the heart and soul of another, nor fathom his motives—the founder or preacher of a new religion must prove his mission by still another sign, which really is infallible, namely, by miracles. To confirm the new doctrine he preaches he must show his credentials from heaven by working miracles. And if, in confirmation of his doctrine, he work miracles, it is impossible for it to be false. For Almighty God, through whom alone miracles are wrought, can not coöperate even apparently in the confirmation of a lie. Truth, as well as holiness, is one of his divine attributes. If Martin Luther, notwithstanding his great sins and vices, had said: "To prove to the world and to all men that I am sent to reform the Catholic Church, I shall, in the name of Almighty God, raise this dead man to life," and then had done so, we should be bound to believe him. Moses and the other prophets, as well as Christ himself and his Apostles proved their divine mission by miracles.

2. *In her doctrine.* She must teach only what makes man really good and pleasing to God, and reject and forbid what is wrong and displeasing to him. The reason is evident. The doctrine of the true Church is of divine origin; it must, therefore, be good and holy, because nothing but what is good can come from God. If, then, there be doctrines which are not holy in any religious denomination, it is a plain sign that it is not the Church of Christ.

3. *In her means.* She must possess all the means necessary for the salvation of mankind. Christ established his Church for the avowed purpose of leading all men to sanctification and salvation. If a religious denomination be destitute of these means, it can not be the Church of Christ.

4. *Lastly, in her members.* A healthy, sound tree brings forth good fruit; so the Church of Christ must produce saints. There must be saints in the Church of Christ who confirm their sanctity by miracles, as Christ expressly declares: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they shall drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover." —*Mark* 16: 17, 18. If therefore any religious denomination can show no saints who wrought miracles it can not be the true Church of Christ.

PART II.

The Catholic Church is really holy, for she has—

1. *A holy founder:* Jesus Christ. It is an undeniable, absolute fact that Jesus Christ established but one Church; it is also incontrovertible that the Catholic Church has always claimed to be the one true Church of Christ. Moreover, if the Church had any other founder than Jesus Christ, Church history would inform us of it. But, if we go back in history, from century to century, we always find the Catholic Church in existence, and no other founder mentioned than Jesus Christ. If she had been established by any other than our divine Saviour, she would have a particular name, the name of her founder, but she never was called anything else than the Catholic Church, from which again it follows that she can have no founder but Christ.

2. *A holy doctrine.* According to the command of her divine Founder, she requires us to love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves; she places Christ before our eyes as our model, and exhorts us to imitate him in our practice of virtue and good works, she declares that no one can be saved unless he observe the commandments of God; she invites us even to observe the evangelical counsels if we have the vocation. She is not content with exterior probity, but insists upon interior sanctity, and requires us to do all things for the honor of God. Moreover, God himself has given testimony to the sanctity of the Catholic doctrine, confirming it by miracles and investing those who propagate it and lived according to it with the power of working miracles. Examples: Numberless saints.

3. *All the means that are necessary to mankind for their sanctification in every circumstance of life.*

As soon as we are born into the world the Church has a sacrament to purify and sanctify us, namely, baptism. She has then the Sacrament of Confirmation in store for us to strengthen us and make us soldiers of the cross. If we have lost our baptismal innocence, she reconciles us with God by holy penance, and all through our life she gives us the sacred Body and Blood of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist as nourishment for our souls; she follows us even to our dying bed and there assists us in the dark passage of death with Extreme Unction, in order that we may courageously fight the last battle in the warfare of life, and enter eternity, bearing the palm of victory and peace. She ordains priests and invests them with the power of reconciling man to God; she also sanctifies matrimony, and obtains for married people the grace

faithfully to fulfil the difficult duties of their state. Moreover, she daily celebrates the sacrifice of the mass, by which she continually applies to us the merits of Christ and implores for us all graces. Besides these means of grace, the Church has many more that are intended to preserve us from sin, to strengthen us in good, and to lead us to perfection. Such means are fasts and feast-days, public worship, the evangelical counsels, jubilees, missions, confraternities, sodalities. In this manner the Church is a faithful administrator and dispenser of the means of salvation deposited with her by Christ, thus providing for the spiritual necessities of her children.

4. *Holy members*, viz., those who by the acceptance of her faith, by the observance of her ordinances and her precepts, and by the use of her means of grace, have become holy. I speak here only of such saints as performed miracles, that is, of such as confirmed their sanctity not only by extraordinary virtues, but also by miracles. In the Catholic Church there is a countless multitude of such saints. To this class belong many martyrs of ancient and modern times, many holy Fathers of the Church, popes, bishops, priests, and religious; many confessors, virgins and penitents; many saints of every state, age, and sex. The Catholic Church evidently bears the mark of sanctity.

PART III.

All other religious denominations are destitute of holiness. They have—

1. *No holy founder.* They assert, indeed, that Christ is their founder, but untruly. It is an historical fact that they sprang into existence in consequence of an open breach with the already existing Catholic Church; they separated from her, and substituted their own doctrine, their own teachers and their own worship in place of those of the Mother Church. He who was the orignator of the defection from the old Mother Church must also be looked upon as the beginner and founder of all these religious denominations. Such founders and heads of new religions are Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, etc. Now, the question is, were these founders of new religions holy? By no means; on the contrary, they were men who were governed and controlled by the basest passions, such as pride, hatred, impurity, etc., and they led a life which not even their adherents can defend. And how about the miracles which they should have performed in confirmation of their divine mission, since they were destitute of ecclesiastical authority? They have never performed any. The religious de-

nominations separated from the Catholic Church have therefore no holy founders.

2. *Unholy doctrine.* Their founders preached doctrines that are the very reserve of holy. They taught, for instance, tnat the Ten Commandments referred only to the Jews, and not to Christians, who were not required to keep them; that man is saved by faith alone, without good works; that good works are not only useless, but sinful; that there is no sin except unbelief; that God, from eternity, predestined one portion of mankind, without any fault of theirs, for eternal damnation, and the other portion, without any merit of theirs, for eternal salvation, etc. According to this horrible doctrine, whatever good works man may do, they profit him nothing if he be predestined for damnation; and if he be predestined to be saved, he can not be lost, let him sin as long and as grievously as he please. Their doctrine was: "You may sin on bravely, but only believe." That these and many other doctrines of the religious denominations separated from us are not holy needs no proof.

3. *Not the necessary means of salvation.* They have not the sacrifice of the mass, for they rejected it. In regard to the sacraments, some have three, others two, others again only one, namely, baptism. At present, many Protestants have gone so far that they do not even recognize baptism as a sacrament, and never have their children baptized.

4. *Lastly, no holy members.* They can not exhibit one saint who, by heroic virtues and by miracles, gave evidence of his sanctity. All the saints mentioned in their religious calendars, and whose names they give to their children, are borrowed from the Catholic Church. With them saints are an impossibility, because their doctrine is not holy. If there be among them pious, good persons, it is not because they live according to the precepts of their religion, but because they follow their better convictions. What Protestant, for instance, could lead, I will not say a holy life, but a life which would be accounted respectable in the eyes of the world, if he were ruled by the doctrine of Luther, who says: "Sin on bravely, but only believe and rejoice in Christ. Sin can not separate us from him (Christ), even if we should commit a thousand sins of impurity, or the same number of homicides in one day."

PERORATION.

All the religious denominations separated from the Catholic Church are destitute of the mark of sanctity; they have no holy

founders of holy doctrine, no sufficient means of salvation, and no saints. From this is evidently follows that not one of them is the true Church of Christ, because this, as I have shown, must be holy. The Catholic Church alone possesses this mark, and, therefore, she alone is the true Church established by Jesus Christ. Return thanks to God that you are members of the Catholic Church which is holy, and aspire to be holy yourself; avoid evil, do good, and aspire after greater perfection every day. Alas, that there should be so many Catholics whose lives are anything but holy. But be not led astray by their bad example; look rather at the great army of the saints who adorn the Catholic Church, and imitate their example. This is your vocation, your sanctification; therefore, never lose sight of it: "Be holy, as your Father in heaven is holy." Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

HOW THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS CELEBRATED SUNDAY.

While men were asleep, his enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat.—Matt. 13: 25.

The devil is always busily engaged in the ruin of man; but it is especially on Sundays that he oversows cockle among the wheat, because many are asleep; that is, instead of laboring for the sanctification of their souls, they pursue pleasures, and lightly expose themselves to dangers and occasions of sin. Sundays in particular are the days most desecrated by sin and vice, and on which numberless Christians lay the foundation of their eternal ruin. It was not so in the primitive ages of Christianity; the Christians of those days employed the Sundays most scrupulously for the service of God. Of the manner in which they celebrated Sunday I shall speak to-day, and explain to you how they manifested this celebration externally—

I. By their dress;
II. By participation in public worship;
III. By works of charity.

Part I.

The first Christians distinguished Sunday from working days—

1. *By wearing better clothes*, in order to show their veneration for God exteriorly as well as interiorly. To this custom St. Leo the Great gives testimony, saying: "If it is reasonable, and, to a certain extent, a duty, to clothe one's self better on a feast-day, thus by the dress of the body to manifest the joy of the heart, and if we adorn the house of God with greater care and richer ornaments, is it not becoming that the Christian soul, which is a true and living temple, should be adorned and free from spot or wrinkle when about to celebrate the mystery of the Redemption?" Behold herein the reason why we wear better clothes on Sundays; it is done to honor God outwardly, and to indicate at the same time the beauty with which the soul of the Christian should be adorned. Do you wear your best clothes on Sundays and holidays for the honor of God? Are you proud of your clothes? Do your Sunday garments give a a true testimony of the beauty of your soul?

2. *By wearing white garments.* White is the emblem of joy, and because Sunday was to the Christians a day of the greatest joy, as it reminded them of the Resurrection of our Lord and the perfection of the work of Redemption, they expressed their joy by wearing white garments. White also indicates innocence and purity of morals, therefore even to the present day young girls and young women appear in white garments on solemn occasions. The primitive Christians signified by their white garments on Sundays that these days should be celebrated in purity of morals. Finally, since in the Apocalypse (4: 4) it is said of the saints in heaven that they are clothed in white, the primitive Christians wished to indicate by this symbol that if we desire to be admitted into the number of the blessed we must imitate them and preserve the robe of innocence undefiled, or if we have stained it by sin, purify and wash it white by tears of penitence. To wear white garments on Sundays is not customary now-a-days, but what these white garments signify must never be forgotten. Let us spend Sunday in holy joy away from sinful pleasures; let us preserve carefully purity of heart, and guard against defiling our conscience by sins; let us rather make use of these days to purify our hearts by a worthy reception of the sacraments.

PART II.

1. As in our days, so also in the times of the Apostles, public worship was held, of which the Apostolic constitutions make mention in these words: "On the day of the Resurrection of our Lord, which we call the day of the Lord (Sunday), we assemble, without intermission, to give thanks to God for the benefits which we have received through Christ." The Christians were so zealous in the observance of this ordinance, that during the times of persecution, when they could not hold their services publicly, they assembled in the catacombs. Church history contains numerous examples of Christians who risked and sometimes lost their lives rather than omit divine worship on Sundays. St. Saturninus and the other Christians who were imprisoned on account of their celebration of Sunday, declared firmly: "The celebration of Sunday is for us a solemn duty, and he that does not perform this duty renders himself guilty of sin. We fulfil it as far as is possible; we are never missing in the holy assembly; we keep the commandment of God, even if it should cost us our lives." All these captive Christians died as martyrs in the year 304. Should not the zeal of the primitive Christians put many of us to shame? We can go to mass on Sundays and holidays without any inconvenience or danger, and yet we so often neglect to do so. How shall we on the day of judgment and in the presence of these primitive heroes account for our indifference in regard to our salvation?

2. The early Christians assisted at the public worship of the Church not only on Sunday, but also at the preliminary devotions which were held the preceding evening. They commenced the celebration of Sunday on Saturday evening, assembling in the church for the appropriate public prayers, which were often protracted far into the night, in order to prepare themselves as well as possible for the great mysteries which were to take place the following day. In some Catholic countries there are traces of this primitive custom even to this day; the bells are rung about three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, when all the faithful immediately repair to the church for these devotions.

3. In the early ages of Christianity the faithful were accustomed to assist at the public services of the Church on Sundays and holidays, *standing*. Catechumens and public penitents were obliged to prostrate themselves on the floor, and even to withdraw when the most solemn part began. Hence, going back even to the time of Tertullian, we find him saying: "We consider it wrong to fast or to pray in a kneeling posture on Sunday." The reason for this custom was because Sunday reminds us of the

Resurrection of Christ, and the Christians wished to express their belief in this mystery by saying their prayers in a standing posture. This custom was observed up to the ninth and tenth centuries. At present, if possible, we kneel during mass, in order to manifest our repentance and humiliation before God. He who stands or sits simply for the sake of being comfortable, as the Pharisee in the temple, shows clearly that he lacks the spirit of reverence for God, and sentiments of humility and contrition.

Part III.

A particular feature in the celebration of Sunday among the early Christians was their works of charity.

1. The *agapæ, or love-feasts,* which were held after divine worship. These love-feasts were held indiscriminately by the rich and the poor, in order to manifest by an external sign the concord and love by which they were united as Christians. They date back as far as the Church itself; St. Paul mentions them.—*I. Cor.* 11: 20-22. The ordering and the supervision of the love-feasts belonged exclusively to the bishop; without his sanction they could not take place.

St. Ignatius, bishop and martyr, says: "It is not becoming without the bishop to baptize or to hold a love-feast." As at other meals so also at the love-feast, they ate meats and dishes prepared with flour and eggs, and drank wine mixed with water. These meats and drinks were prepared in the houses of the wealthier people and were carried into the church after divine worship, where, under the superintendence of the bishop, they were distributed and eaten by those present. Only those Christians who were in communion with the Church and led edyifying lives were permited to participate in the agapæ. Besides the general agapæ, there were also minor feasts held in private houses under the immediate supervision of priests and deacons. In consequence of abuses they were afterwards discontinued. A trace of these love-feasts is found in the wedding dinner, which can not be disapproved of, provided that everything contrary to sobriety and decorum be avoided.

2. *Alms,* which were collected, when divine worship was over, and given to the deacons for distribution among the poor. Of these alms St. Paul speaks.—*I. Cor.* 16: 2. St. Justin the Martyr says: "After divine worship is over, every one gives according to his means or will to the poor, and the sum that is collected is deposited with the deacon, that therewith he may support the orphans and widows, the sick, the needy, the captives, and strangers." The collections which are still made during divine

worship for various good purposes are nothing new, but as old as the Church. We should not therefore become indignant at the large number of collections, for if the necessities are multiplied, as is the case in our days, the collections must be multiplied. Let us think of the first Christians, who always gave cheerfully, although these collections were repeated every Sunday. "Prayer is good, with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold. For alms delivereth from death, and the same is what purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting." —*Tob.* 12: 8, 9.

PERORATION.

Since you know with what zeal the first Christians celebrated Sunday, let their example be an incentive to you also to sanctify this day and to spend it in such a manner that it may become to you a day of grace and salvation. Wear better clothes on Sunday than on week-days, not through pride, to please men, but for the honor of God. Assist devoutly at mass, and sanctify the day by prayer and good works, that the word of the Lord may be fulfilled in you: "Every one that keepeth the Sabbath from profaning it, I will bring into my holy mount."—*Is.* 56: 6, 7. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

SIN, A SLEEP.

While men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat.—Matt. 13: 25.

Sleep puts man into a state in which he knows nothing of what happens either within or around him; his appearance is as if he were really dead. For this reason the enemy chose the time while men were asleep to carry out his wicked design of oversowing cockle among the wheat. Sin bears a great resemblance to sleep; for it is calculated, especially if once deeply rooted and become a predominant passion, to deprive man of all knowledge of what is right or wrong. Let us to-day seriously mediate on

the subject. *Sin is a sleep*, for like sleep, it deprives man of his five senses, namely:

I. Sight;
II. Hearing;
III. Taste;
IV. Smell;
V. Touch.

Part I.

Of all the senses, the loss of *sight* is the greatest privation. As sleep closes the eyes of man so that he can not see, rendering the brightest day as dark to him as blackest night, so sin deprives man of the faculty of sight. Seneca the philosopher relates an amusing incident of an old woman, named Harpaste, who lived in his house, and who, when on account of age she had become blind, would not believe that she was blind, but continually called upon her attendants to take her to some other house, as she could not see in the one which she occupied, because all the windows were walled up. How many sinners there are who resemble this old woman! They are really blind, but will not believe it. They are blind to their faults, and if they do see them, try nevertheless to cover them with the mantle of virtue. There are many examples from Bible history proving the truth of this assertion. For instance, David, who committed the two great crimes of adultery and murder and lived in apparent tranquillity for a considerable time, till finally the Prophet Nathan opened his eyes.—*II. Kings, chap.* 11, 12.

The Scribes and Pharisees also, who were full of ambition, hatred, and envy, and yet thought themselves just. Examples from life.

There are many who always desire to be praised, honored, and preferred; who are always right and will yield to no one; whose veins swell at the least appearance of insult, and who give vent to their indignation at the least slight or neglect. They are evidently proud, and the worst feature of all is that they can not see it, and consequently never accuse themselves of pride when they go to confession. There are others again whose heart and affections are set almost exclusively upon accumulating money and temporal goods, who seem never to have enough, who avariciously deny themselves and others the necessaries of life, and would repulse with indignation and abuse a poor man begging at their door for a piece of bread. They are misers, totally blind to their passion of avarice, in spite of what they

may say to the contrary. If you attempted in a mild, prudent way to prove to them that they are miserly and avaricious, you would he astonished at the plausible arguments they would adduce to prove to you that the avarice of which you accused them is prudent economy. There is still another class who entertain carnal desires for persons of the opposite sex, but they are so blinded that they see nothing in this illicit love but similarity of temperament, mutual affinity, and benevolence, which certainly does not offend against chastity. Lastly, there is another and a far larger class of spiritually blind persons who live altogether according to the maxims and spirit of the world, who never labor to suppress their inordinate inclinations, never mortify themselves either exteriorly or interiorly, but lead a life in direct opposition to the spirit of Christianity; and yet they think it is all right: God must, forsooth, be satisfied with them because they say short morning and evening prayers, and go to church regularly. Thus, you see, sin renders very many persons spiritually blind. Examine yourselves, then, to see if perchance you may not be classed under some of the above heads. Be not blind. Compare your disposition, your inclinations, and your actions, with the Christian law, and with the example of Christ and the saints. If you do, your eyes will be opened, and you will see exactly where you are.

PART II.

Sleep closes the ears to all sound and deadens the sense of *hearing*. The hurried steps of people may clatter on the pavement below the windows, the heavily-laden dray may go jolting along from cobble to cobble, the old clock may tick loudly with every vibration of its pendulum and strike the hours throughout the long night; the faithful watch-dog may bark at the distant moon, nay, burglars may ransack the whole house, yet the sound sleeper hears nothing, even if they enter his room. He seems totally to have lost the sense of hearing. In like manner sin renders man spiritually deaf. Conscience, it is true, is ever awake and knocks at the sinner's heart, reproaching him bitterly for his sinful life and reminding him of the terrible wrath of God, but he is perfectly deaf, he does not listen to its voice. When the Ammonites sacrificed their children by placing them in the glowing red-hot arms of the idol Moloch, they made a tremendous din and uproar, so that the cries and shrieks of the poor little children could not be heard. Thus the sinner plunges himself into a tumult of worldly pleasures and debaucheries to drown the cries of conscience that he is unwilling to hear. He does not heed the admonitions and warnings of his pastor, and other well-meaning persons, but either disregards them or treats them

with ridicule. The Jews acted in this manner, especially their leaders, the Scribes and Pharisees; therefore St. Stephen cried out to them: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you also."—*Acts* 7: 51. There are many sons and daughters who do not regard the entreaties, admonitions, and threats of their parents; they will not to what is required of them, and persist in frequenting places forbidden by their parents. They are deaf to the grace of God, who would rouse them from the lethargy of sin by joyful and mournful events, such as jubilees, missions, and sudden deaths; still they persevere in sin. The salvation of such "deaf" persons is in imminent peril; they live in constant fear that the threat of the Lord will be fulfilled in them: "Because I called, and you refused; I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded. You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared."—*Prov.* 1: 24, 25. Oh, that every sinner would take these terrible words to heart and be aroused from the sleep of sin!

Part III.

Sleep deprives us of *taste* as well as of hearing. The sleeping person has no desire to eat or drink, and if you aroused him and offered him the most dainty viands, he would refuse them and become indignant because he is disturbed in his sleep. The sinner is also destitute of the sense of taste. He loathes the things of heaven as some of the Israelites did the manna: "Our soul now loatheth this very light food."—*Numb.* 21: 5. The most precious viands are insipid in his mouth: he has no relish for divine things: he finds no pleasure in prayer: he avoids prayer in common as much as he can, or if he prays at all, it is without devotion. If he hears the word of God, it is without attention: perhaps he yawns or sleeps; discourses on heavenly things are disagreeable to him and he avoids persons who talk on such subjects. What shall I say of the sacraments? To receive them is a burden to him, and no time comes more inopportune than Easter, when for decency's sake he finally resolves to go to confession and communion. Catholics of this description speak disparagingly of the religious exercises, mock those who show fervor in those exercises, and call them fanatics and devotees. They, however, relish the world and its goods and pleasures, seeking in them their heaven. They say with the wicked in Holy Writ: "Come, therefore and let us enjoy the good things that are present: and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments; and let not the flower of the time pass by us; let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be

withered; let no meadow escape our riot; let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us everywhere leave tokens of joy, for this is our portion and this our lot."—*Wis.* 2: 6-9. But what folly. The world with its lust passes away and gives so little satisfaction that even Solomon, who had enjoyed all the pleasures of the world superabundantly, full of disgust, exclaimed: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."—*Eccltes.* 1: 2. Oh! that the children of the world would begin at once to serve God; they would soon find pleasure in his service and exclaim with David: "Oh, taste, and see that the Lord is sweet."—*Ps.* 33: 9.

PART IV.

Sleep also deprives us of the sense of *smell.* The gas may escape and fill the room of the sleeper with its insupportable odor, which may suffocate him, but he will never smell it. So it is with the sinner. An angel was once accompanying a hermit, and on the way they met an elegantly dressed young man, whereupon the angel covered his nose with his hand. Going on a little farther, they came across a decomposed body in such a state of putrefaction that the poor hermit could not refrain from holding his nose. But the angel did not this time cover his nose to avoid the horrible stench, which astonished the hermit. Then the angel said to him: "We do not regard the bad odor that proceeds from the bodies of men, but only that which emanates from their soul. That elegantly dressed young man, who just passed, is steeped in sin, and his soul diffuses an odor that was insupportable to me, but this decomposed body causes me not the least repugnance." Whether this story be true or not, it nevertheless contains a lesson. As virtues are a sweet odor to God, to his angels and to pious Christians, so sins and vices are to them a horrible stench. Yet the sinner regards it not. God spurns him with the greatest displeasure, turns his eyes away from him, and the sinner sees it not. By his sins and debaucheries he loses his honor and good name before men, and he regards it not. Through his continual life of sin and his lasting impenitence he is so near the brink of perdition, the precipice of the abyss of hell, that he could smell the fetid smoke and sulphur which rise from it, if he had not lost all sense of smell; he continues to sleep as if he were inhaling the odors of balsam.

Are there not such sleepers among us? Yes, there are; and they are all those who commit the most abominable sins without shame, who have lost all sense and feeling of honor, and upon whom neither admonitions nor threats make an impression. I need not remark that their eternal salvation is in imminent danger; they are already so stupefied with the deadly vapors of

sin that it is probable they will never again awake from their sleep, but eventually fall into eternal death.

Part V.

Sleep has also the power of blunting the sense of *touch*, so that a person may, if not altogether, at least in a great measure, lose the sense of feeling, and become, for the time being, paralyzed. For instance, if a sick person be overpowered by sleep, he does not feel the pains which he experienced before. Nay, physicians can produce so deep a sleep by opium, chloroform, or ether, that they can perform the most painful operations without the sleeping person feeling anything.

Frequently the sleep of sin has the same effect. Many a one sins much and grievously; he should feel the greatest sorrow for it, since there is no greater misfortune than sin; by it you lose the grace of God, that precious jewel which not all the treasures of the world can equal; you lose all the merits you have acquired for heaven, and render yourself incapable of gaining more: you exclude yourself from heaven, and are in imminent danger of being lost for ever, and should you feel no grief? Oh! every night you should water your couch with your tears; you should throw yourself with Magdalene at the feet of Jesus, and, dumb with sorrow, wash them with tears of penitence; you should with Peter go out and weep bitterly. But what do you do? In your deep sleep of sin you are merry and contented; you laugh and joke, you lie down tranquilly and rise in good spirits; the worldly, sinful life agrees with you so much that you would not exchange it for heaven. A vain, worldly daughter of Eve once said; "If I could go to heaven this minute I would rather not die, so much am I pleased with the world." If we represent to such sinners the danger to which they expose their salvation, even risking hell-fire with all its torments, they remain indifferent; nay some even laugh at us and scornfully say: "That is the talk of priests; perhaps there is no hell at all, and if there is one, I suppose we can endure it." The words of Scripture apply to them: "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, and there was no remedy."—*II. Paralip.* 36: 16.

Peroration.

Behold, then, in how many ways sin resembles sleep; and remember that just as sleep deprives us of our five corporal senses, so, in the spiritual order, sin deprives the soul of the sinner of the faculty of seeing, feeling, and realizing its pernicious consequen-

ces. There are many sinners fallen so deeply into the lethargy of sin, that nothing will rouse them till they are cast into the scorching, seething fire of hell. What else can I say to these unhappy sleepers but the words of the Apostle: "Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee."—*Eph.* 5: 14. Yes, rise from the sleep of sin, make good use of the grace which is yet given you for penance and amendment of life, and from this day forward be watchful so that the enemy of your salvation may not again sow cockle in the field of your heart. "Walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Rom.* 13: 13, 14. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

WHY GOD SUFFERS THE WICKED AMONG THE GOOD.

Suffer both to grow until the harvest.—Matt. 13: 30.

When the servants had noticed the cockle among the wheat, they came to their Master and said: *Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?* What answer does he give? Does he approve of their plan? No; on the contrary, he forbids it, adding that they should let both grow until the harvest. Many Christians are of the same opinion as were these servants. They lose all patience with the wicked. They look with horror on the wreck and ruin they are causing. They would call down fire from heaven upon them, and they ask in astonishment: How is it possible that God bears so long with these wicked people? Why does he not put a stop to their pernicious career? Why does he not chastise them as they have deserved a hundred times? But God's ways are above our ways. As the good man of the house permitted the cockle to remain among the wheat till the harvest, so God suffers the bad among the good until the harvest—the day of judgment—when he will make the separation, casting the wicked into the flames of hell, and conducting the good to heaven. Let us, consider, to-day, the wisdom of God in suffering the bad to

remain among the good, and answer the two following questions:

I. Why does God suffer the wicked in general?
II. Why especially does he suffer them among the good?

Part I.

God is patient with the wicked—

1. *In order to manifest his mercy.* St. Denis relates that a certain man named Karpus, exasperated on account of the wicked deeds of two very vicious men, prayed God several times to take them out of the world. Christ appeared to him in a dream and showed him a frightful precipice on the brink of which the two sinners were hanging trembling. Serpents came darting out from beneath the rocks and began entwining themselves around the wretched men, and dragging them into the abyss. Karpus was pleased with this frightful sight, and only regretted these two sinners were not plunged at once into the abyss. But to his surprise he saw Christ stretching out his hand to the unfortunates and declaring himself ready to shed his blood for them again. Behold here the goodness and mercy of God! Christ is so solicitous for the salvation of sinners that he is prepared to suffer and die again for them. When the angels fell, they were irretrievably lost; God gave them no further grace, but cast them into hell; but he shows mercy to sinful men; he bears with them for a long time, heaping grace upon grace, that they may enter into themselves and be converted from their evil ways. The Church admonishes heretics and great sinners two or three times before she excludes them from her communion. Thus God also has patience with sinners, and admonishes them by their conscience, by preachers and confessors, by holy seasons and feasts, by prosperous and adverse circumstances, before he excludes them from the communion of saints and condemns them to the torments of hell. Oh, that the sinner would appreciate this goodness and mercy of God and employ them for his salvation! Oh, that we would take to heart the words of the Apostle: "O man, despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?"—*Rom.* 2 : 4.

2. *In order to manifest his justice before the whole world.* Supposing that God punished men immediately after the commission of a mortal sin by death and damnation. What would be the consequence? Many would say: God is too severe; he knows the weakness of men and how easily they can fall into mortal sin;

he should be more indulgent with them and not immediately condemn them because of one mortal sin. Such words would indeed be groundless and blasphemous, for every man knows what is before him when he commits a mortal sin; sufficient grace is given to every one to guard against it; if nevertheless he sins grievously, he does so knowingly and with premeditation; he could not therefore complain nor accuse God of excessive severity, much less of injustice, should he condemn him at once to eternal perdition. But, in order to take away from men even the slightest excuse for complaining of excessive severity, God bears with the sinner for a long time, gives him year after year, adds grace upon grace, so that he could be converted if he would. Every sinner, even the damned in hell, must confess: "Thou art just, O Lord, and all thy judgments are just."—*Tob.* 3: 3. For a hundred and twenty years God delayed the punishment which he had threatened to inflict upon the sinful human race, in the days of Noe. The blind sinners ridiculed his threats, and instead of turning from their evil ways, plunged deeper into the mire of vice. But behold, when the time of grace was past, the deluge came suddenly upon the wicked and swept them away. The same happened in Egypt to Pharaoh whose heart was hardened against the warnings and chastisements of God, and who in his insolence said: "Who is the Lord, that I should hear his voice and let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."—*Exod.* 5: 2. God showed him that he was the Lord and had power to punish blasphemers. The waves of the Red Sea swallowed him up, with his whole army. Jerusalem suffered a similar or even worse fate. When she did not know the time of her visitation, and persevered in her impenitence, the prophecy of Christ was fulfilled, and she was entirely destroyed by the Romans. God has done so at all times, and he does so to-day; he bears patiently with sinners for a long time, but when his appointed hour arrives, he manifests his power and chastises them. The soul that sinneth shall die. Sin therefore no more, and if you should be so unfortunate as to fall into a grievous sin, remain not in that deplorable state impenitently; but consider that every one who does not profit by the mercy of God by a speedy repentance, becomes a victim to his justice. "Say not, the mercy of the Lord is great, he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day, for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee."—*Ecclus.* 5: 6-9. If you see that God is indulgent with sinners, and does not check their wickedness and malice, adore his wisdom, because he is patient with them only in order to manifest in them his goodness, his justice, or his omnipotence.

Part II.

Why does God tolerate the wicked among the good in particular? He tolerates them—

1. *That the wicked may be converted by the good.* St. Augustine says: "Those who are cockle to-day may be wheat to-morrow." As long as a man lives, he may be converted, though he be the greatest sinner; for God desires not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."—*Ezech.* 33: 11. God, then, tolerates the wicked among the good, that the former may be converted and saved by the latter. It can not be denied that many sinners are thus induced by intercourse with the good to do penance and to amend their lives. This is effected by the words and example of the good.

(*a.*) Many sinners come to the knowledge of their sinful state by the good doctrines and exhortations of pious Christians, repent of their sins and are converted. How many husbands are converted by their wives; how many wayward children by their parents; how many brothers by their sisters; how many neighbors by their neighbors.

(*b.*) Much more effectual is the example of the virtuous. Actions speak louder than words; the virtues of the good, their meekness, modesty, love of enemies, fervor in the performance of the duties of their state of life, which sinners have always before their eyes, make a salutary impression upon them; they feel ashamed when they compare themselves with these pious persons; they hate and detest their sinful life and resolve to amend it. They are shamed into conversion. Thus the virtuous example of the first Christians was the most effectual sermon for the conversion of the Gentiles. They said: A religion which makes man so holy must be from God; they renounced idolatry and became Christians. We find a multitude of proofs of the power and influence of good example in the Lives of the Saints. I shall mention only one: Afra, a pagan steeped in vice, received one day the holy Bishop Narcissus, with his deacon, into her house. Seeing how this saint and his deacon spent the night in prayer and singing psalms, she was struck with amazement, and throwing herself at the feet of the bishop, confessed her sins and requested to be baptized. She became a Christian, converted her mother and her two maids, and died a martyr. (5 *Aug.*) Good example effects so much that it does violence, as it were, to the sinner, causing him to enter into himself and to be converted. Is it not best, then, that God should tolerate the bad among the good?

2. *That the good may be tried by the wicked.* St. Augustine says: "Every wicked man lives either that he may be converted, or that the good man may be tried by him." But wherein are the good tried by the wicked?

(*a.*) *In their fervor in virtue.* The Romans and Lacedæmonians were continually at war with each other. One day the Roman Senate assembled to deliberate whether Lacedæmon should be destroyed or not. The preservation of the city was decreed, that Roman youths might not become effeminate by uninterrupted peace. Lacedæmon was to serve as a whetstone to keep them inured to warfare. Thus the bad are the whetstones of the good. As the good are never left at peace by the wicked, but always oppressed, persecuted, reviled and enticed to sin, they are under the necessity of continually watching, praying and combating, because otherwise they would not, perhaps, persevere in virtue. If left undisturbed, it is to be feared they would grow remiss in their fervor and become lukewarm. How zealous were the Christians during the three hundred years of persecution! By far the most of them led a life of sanctity. But when they obtained rest and peace their fervor vanished, heresies sprang up and cockle appeared among the wheat. Let us cast a glance at our own time. It is sad to contemplate how the Church at present is oppressed and persecuted almost everywhere; but do we not see that among Catholics, especially in places where persecution prevails most, the zeal displayed in the spiritual life is greater than it was during the long years of peace?

(*b.*) *In Christian fortitude.* It is not a difficult task to live piously with the pious; the good incite us by word and example to virtue and the fear of God. He that lives among the good, suffers fewer temptations; as he is not enticed to sin from without he can easily practice many virtues, such as meekness, humility, mildness, and love of his neighbor, for the simple reason that no one gives him an opportunity to commit the opposite vices. But it is different when one lives among the wicked; great fortitude with self-control is required to remain faithful to God when one has scandals and bad examples continually before one's eyes, and is allured first to this, then to that sin. Joseph's innocence shines in a more resplendent light in the house of Putiphar than in the house of his father Jacob. If now-a-days, when corruption is so prevalent among young people, boys and girls walk in purity of morals and the fear of God, they deserve great praise for their fortitude. Thus you see again how expedient it is that God should tolerate the bad among the good.

3. *That they may receive a greater reward in heaven.*

(*a.*) The more good we do, the greater will be the reward in store for us. "He who soweth in blessings, shall also reap blessings."—*II. Cor.* 9: 6. The wicked give us an opportunity of practicing Christian virtues If there were no bad people among us, we could not practice many of the Christian virtues, as meekness, patience, love of our enemies, and mildness; consequently, we should lose all the merits which we can gain by the exercise of such necessary and important virtues.

(*b.*) The more difficult the practice of virtue is made for us, the greater our reward will be. The reason is obvious. By surmounting greater difficulties we manifest a greater zeal for virtue and a greater love for God, and, therefore, merit a greater reward. Thus it may happen that by the practice of one virtue, which is rendered difficult for us in a high degree, we may acquire greater merit than by a hundred other good works, which we can easily do. Now it is certain that wicked people render the performance of good difficult for us in various ways, for they endeavor to make us desist from it by persuasion, ridicule, and even by violence.

(*c.*) Lastly, the more we are obliged to suffer for God, the greater our reward will be. Christ himself says: "Blessed are ye, when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you untruly, for my sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."—*Matt.* 5. 11, 12. How much evil are not the good obliged to suffer from the wicked! And how much merit have they not an opportunity of gaining for themselves, if they only bear constantly and patiently the sufferings which are inflicted upon them by the wicked!

PERORATION.

God therefore does well and is just in tolerating the cockle among the wheat, the bad among the good. He has an object in doing this. He suffers the bad among the good in order to convert the former by the latter, to manifest his goodness, mercy, and power, to try the good by the bad, and to reward them the more in heaven. Let us, in this disposition of Providence, adore God's wisdom with the most profound reverence and submission. Let us be careful that in our intercourse with the wicked we suffer not the loss of our own souls. Let us endeavor, on the contrary, by word, example and prayer, to gain over the bad to God. Let us be constant in the service of God and never allow ourselves to be diverted from the path of truth and duty, that, as good wheat, we may be gathered into the barn of eternal life. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

LUKEWARMNESS.

While men were asleep, his enemy came aed oversowed cockle among the wheat.—Matt. 13: 25.

While men were asleep the enemy succeeded in sowing cockle among the wheat. If they had been watchful he would not have dared to execute his wicked design, or they could have prevented him from accomplishing it. Who are represented by the sleeping men? The lukewarm, who spiritually give themselves to slumber and become careless in everything pertaining to the service of God and the salvation of their soul. It is an easy matter for the devil to accomplish his wicked designs in regard to such lukewarm Christians. As they do not relish heavenly things, make no use of the means of salvation, and live a careless life, full of distractions, it does not cost him much labor or pains to separate them from God little by little, and get them into his power. Let us to-day consider lukewarmness under the three following points:

I. The signs of lukewarmness;
II. Its evil consequences;
III. Its remedies.

PART I.

In order to ascertain in what lukewarmness consists, we must consider the conduct of the lukewarm man —

1. *In regard to sin.* He does not wish to commit mortal sins, but he does not fear venial ones, and commits them without scruple. He is careful not to allow his anger to break out into curses and blasphemies, but he is bitter in his words, and peevish in his deportment. He is not guilty of gross calumnies against his neighbor, but he continually criticises his conduct and speaks frequently of the faults of others. Impurity may be disgusting to him, nor is he guilty of adultery or fornication; but he does not avoid looking at persons and objects that cause him impure temptations; he also voluntarily entertains sensual and unchaste

inclinations to persons of the opposite sex. He does not cheat, steal, or rob, but his heart clings to temporal goods and he does not like to hear of giving alms. He does not get drunk, at least not often; he is not a gambler by profession, neither does he keep late hours, but he leads an easy, comfortable, careless life, and withal is fond of pleasures. In a word, he stands in the middle of two extremes, between good and bad; for he is not vicious, nor yet is he virtuous: he is "neither hot nor cold."

2. *In regard to virtue and good works.*

He practices virtue and good works when they cause no exertion, or when there are no obstacles to be surmounted or difficulties to be undergone. He is patient when he has nothing to suffer, meek when he is not offended or no one resists him, humble when he is honored, friendly and affectionate when he is flattered and treated in a friendly manner; but as soon as anything unfavorable happens he loses all patience; he is very sensitive to every offense and entertains anger and aversion in his heart; when he meets with a little humiliation he is offended; when he is contradicted his veins swell with anger. At the bottom of his exercises of virtue and good works there are frequently ignoble motives, human respect, etc. If, for instance, he controls his temper, bridles his passions, observes decorum, gives alms, he does not do it for God or through supernatural motives, but only that he may not lose the respect of others, or human praise. All the good he does is tinsel, without value before God.

3. *In regard to religious exercises.*

Of these he is not fond. He confines such exercises to the smallest possible measure and omits whatever is not commanded under the penalty of sin. He never hears a mass on week-days, although he has time and could do so without any inconvenience; he neglects to hear the word of God on holidays, and never goes to vespers; he confesses and communicates only once a year—at Easter. I am not bound to go oftener, he says. Whatever he does in this respect is done most imperfectly and carelessly, and only partially. He prays without any devotion, with many distractions, hastily, in order to get to the end; long devotions are burdensome to him and cause weariness. If sometimes he listens to the word of God, it is without the intention of profiting by it. If he goes to confession and communion he has not the earnest will to amend his life, to extirpate his evil inclinations, and to serve God more fervently.

4. *In regard to his salvation.*

Of this he seldom thinks, and generally only casually. How he can get along in the world, better his temporal circumstances, lead a happy life—these are his all-absorbing cares and anxieties; he cares little or nothing for the service of God or the salvation of his soul. His heart is always occupied with earthly things, and even when he is at church and assisting at mass he is full of worldly thoughts and distractions, and out of a hundred "Our Fathers," there is scarcely one that he says with devotion. As he does not relish God and divine things his mind wanders about, seeking everything that can afford him diversion. He throws himself into society and fills his soul with vanities, so that the words of the Lord apply to him "My people have done two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."—*Jerem.* 2: 13. These are the most prominent signs of lukewarmness. Reflect seriously and see whether you may not perhaps discover one or other of these signs in yourself.

PART II.

The evil consequences of lukewarmness are—

1. *Blindness.* As the lukewarm man fulfils certain Christian duties, and avoids gross, palpable vices, he thinks himself just and faultless, and like the Pharisee thanks God that he is not as the rest of mankind. Even when he has gone so far that he will not stop at the commision of mere venial faults, but plunges also into mortal sins, love and conceit will so blind him that he will not see the miserable state of his soul because he does not desire to see it. He over-estimates the little good he does, and fails to take into consideration the vast amount of good he omits, and which he is strictly obliged to perform and for which he has every facility. Blinded by the beam in his own eye, he makes it a part of his business to go about extracting the mote from his neighbor's. To him are applicable the words of Holy Writ: "Thou sayest: I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."—*Apoc.* 3: 17. Many among us are no doubt lukewarm, but who is there that knows and acknowledges that such is his condition? And why? Because lukewarmness blinds us.

2. *Malice.* A malicious person not only does no good himself, but hates to see others do any, and tries to prevent it whenever it is possible. Lukewarm, irreligious men call prayer pious lazi-

ness. Hearing the Word of God, frequent reception of the sacraments, participation in devotions, missions, jubilees, sodalities—in a word, all the means of piety and exercises of religion—are to them an annoyance; they speak against them, dispute their utility, and cause others to dishonor them. They belong to that class of profligates of whom the Holy Ghost says that they esteem the life of the just madness, and their end without honor. —*Wis.* 5: 4.

3. *Indignation and exasperation at salutary exhortations.* As a man who wishes to sleep becomes angry when he is disturbed, so lukewarm persons become indignant if you attempt to rouse them from their spiritual lethargy. They conceive therefore a strong dislike to their pastor, when, in the faithful performance of his duties, he says anything in the pulpit that seems to be directed against them. The pastor may be a brave, fearless man, who, unlike the heretical ministers, preaches the Word of God regardless of the frowns or smiles of any particular individual; following the injunction of the Apostle, he exhorts, entreats, rebukes, and reproves, regardless as to where the blows fall or whom they strike. And when in the confessional he is bound to take them in hand personally and individually, and perhaps administers a mild rebuke, they go forth calling him a blind zealot, a disturber of the peace, a man unacquainted with the niceties and sensibilities of refined people!

4. *Lastly, impenitence.* St. Bernardine of Siena says: "I have seen usurers, soldiers, heathens, and harlots doing penance and being converted; but I tremble because I have never witnessed the conversion of a lukewarm Christian." The lukewarm resemble consumptive persons, who do not know their dangerous condition, and therefore refuse the medicine which might cure them. They imagine that it is all right, and are consequently deaf to admonitions, persevering in impenitence.

Part III.

Of the remedies against lukewarmness I will mention but three:

1. *The consideration of the truths of our holy religion, especially of the four last things.* A young hermit once addressed his spiritual director thus: "How does it come, father, that dryness and laziness overwhelm me?" He replied: "This is evidence that you do not sufficiently represent to your mind the glory of heaven nor the pains of hell; for if you would do so, the desire for the happiness of heaven, and the fear of eternal punishment, would

be a sufficient stimulus for fervor and contrition, and then your spiritual tepidity and lukewarmness could be combated." The strongest fire will not warm you if you remain away from it; if you are to derive heat from it you must draw near. Thus the most serious truths of our holy religion make no impression upon us, if we do not bring them home to ourselves by meditation. It is only when we seriously reflect on these truths and take them to heart that they will enlighten, warm, and encourage us to be solicitous for the one thing necessary. Often reflect, then, how vain and transitory are all things earthly, how soon death will come, upon which an eternity depends, how ineffably happy are the elect in heaven, and how inexpressibly miserable the damned in hell—think of this and you will be cured of your lukewarmness, and with renewed fervor you will labor for your salvation.

2. *The consideration of the example of Christ and the saints.* Consider how many tribulations and hardships Christ has borne for you from the moment he entered into this world; how he watched whole nights, praying for you; how he went about preaching his gospel for three years; how he was betrayed by Judas; how he was scourged, crowned with thorns, suffered and died in order to redeem you from sin and hell. Consider also what the Apostles endured when they went into the world to preach the gospel; what the martyrs suffered, and the confessors and virgins. These examples should encourage you to renounce your tepidity, and to spend the rest of your days in serving God. Put your hand to the plough and do not look back.

3. *The consideration of the great danger into which lukewarmness brings man.* "I know thy works," says the Lord in the Apocalypse (3: 15, 16), "that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." Did you ever attempt to drink lukewarm water? It is more disgusting than quinine or castor oil, and is sometimes prescribed by physicians as an emetic, and is sure to produce vomiting. God cannot love the lukewarm, because lukewarmness generally leads to grievous sins, and eventually to final impenitence. God is forced, as it were, to vomit them forth from the bowels of His mercy and cast them out of his mouth for ever. An example of this is the lazy, slothful servant mentioned in the gospel, whom the Lord, because he buried his talent, called a wicked, unprofitable servant, and commanded him to be cast into exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. St. Teresa, who had grown somewhat remiss in the fervor with which she had served God in the beginning, and found pleasure in the vanities of the world, saw afterwards the place in hell which was prepared for

her, if she had not returned to her former state of fervour. Let us consider that all the damned have prepared for themselves the way to hell by lukewarmness.

PERORATION.

"In doing good let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap, not failing."—*Gal.* 6: 9. Let us work for our perfection and sanctification by overcoming our faults, extirpating our sinful inclinations, and purifying our hearts from all inordinate love of self and the world. Let us avail ourselves of the opportunities of laying up treasures for the kingdom of heaven, by performing good works, as well as profiting by all the other means of salvation. Let us persevere steadfastly in the service of God, that we may hear one day those consoling words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—*Matt.* 25: 21. Amen.

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Zollner, Johann E.

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